Letters of Maqbool Bhat

(Translated from Urdu into English)

Compiled and Translated by Arqam Khawaja
u/arqamkhawaja (Reddit)

Note: Letters numbered 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 14, and 29 were not translated by me. These were previously available in English and have been included here as found. As such, their tone or style may differ slightly from the rest of the translations. The source for these letters is:

1. https://web.archive.org/web/20241125110852/https://maqboolreborn.wordpress.com/category/letters/
2. https://web.archive.org/web/20180621075104/http://kashmirdispatch.com/2016/02/11/maqbool-bhats-letter-to-his-son/

Catalogue of Letters

No.	Letters	Page
01.	Maqbool Bhat to G.M. Mufti	4
02.	Maqbool Bhat to G.M. Mufti	6
03.	Maqbool Bhat to Abdul Khaliq Ansari	9
04.	Maqbool Bhat to Dr. Farooq Haider	10
05.	Maqbool Bhat to Yusuf Zargar	13
06.	Maqbool Bhat to Azra (Daughter)	16
07.	Maqbool Bhat to Showkat Maqbool (Son)	22
08.	Maqbool Bhat to Begum Farooq Haider	24
09.	Maqbool Bhat to Abdul Aziz Bhat (Uncle)	25
10.	Maqbool Bhat to Abdul Aziz Bhat (Uncle)	27
11.	Maqbool Bhat to Malik Muhammad Asghar	29
12.	Maqbool Bhat to Ikramullah Jaswal	31
13.	Maqbool Bhat to Muhammad Arif	36
14.	Maqbool Bhat to Javaid Maqbool Bhat (Son)	38
15.	Maqbool Bhat to Ikramullah Jaswal	40
16.	Maqbool Bhat to Muhammad Arif	42
17.	Maqbool Bhat to Arshad Mahmood Ansari	44
18.	Maqbool Bhat to Muhammad Arif	46
19.	Maqbool Bhat to Arshad Mahmood Ansari	48
20.	Maqbool Bhat to Malik Ijaz Ahmed	50
21.	Maqbool Bhat to Ikramullah Jaswal	52
22.	Maqbool Bhat to Malik Ghulam Sarwar	54
23.	Maqbool Bhat to Arshad Mahmood Ansari	56
24.	Maqbool Bhat to Dr. Farooq Haider	58
25.	Maqbool Bhat to Malik Ghulam Sarwar	60
26.	Maqbool Bhat to Raja Muzaffar Khan	62
27.	Maqbool Bhat to Ikramullah Jaswal	65
28.	Maqbool Bhat to Muhammad Arif	67
29.	Maqbool Bhat to Mian Ghulam Sarwar	70
30.	Maqbool Bhat to Malik Ghulam Sarwar	73
31.	Maqbool Bhat to Raja Muzaffar Khan	75
32.	Maqbool Bhat to Rasheed Zafar	77
33.	Maqbool Bhat to Malik Muhammad Asghar	78
34.	Maqbool Bhat to Dr. Farooq Haider	80
35.	Maqbool Bhat to Mian Ghulam Sarwar	83
36.	Maqbool Bhat to Dr. Farooq Haider	84
37.	Maqbool Bhat to Malik Ghulam Sarwar	85
38.	Maqbool Bhat to Master Muhammad Maqbool	87
39.	Maqbool Bhat to Dr. Farooq Haider	89
40.	Maqbool Bhat to Naseer Wani	91

Preface

The following compilation contains English translations of letters written by Maqbool Bhat during his imprisonment. These letters—many of which were preserved and later published in Urdu under the title ***Shaoor-e-Farda*** by *Saaed Asad*—are of both historical and personal value. They offer insight into the political thinking, emotional discipline, and everyday challenges faced by a man who spent years behind bars, often under the shadow of a death sentence.

Letters are not policy documents or official statements. They are private correspondences—written in the solitude of prison, often without certainty of reply, and with no audience other than the intended recipient. In such a space, language becomes direct, and emotion is rarely decorative. These letters show a person as he is: structured in thought, conscious of history, yet still human in feeling. They cover a range of topics—from personal concerns and social commentary to political advice and reflections on loyalty, fear, and responsibility.

This translation was undertaken with the aim of making these writings accessible to a wider audience, particularly those who are unable to read Urdu. Translation is never a perfect process; however, care was taken to ensure that each letter's tone, structure, and intent were preserved as closely as possible. Every line was reviewed and edited by hand to maintain accuracy and consistency with the original spirit of the writing.

This compilation also includes a final letter addressed to *Mr. Naseer Wani*, which is not part of *Shaoor-e-Farda*. I was able to obtain this letter directly from *Mr. Wani*, who shared it upon request. While it may not be the last letter Maqbool Bhat ever wrote, it is the final known one available at this time. Its inclusion completes the collection to the best of what is currently available to the public.

These letters are important not because of who wrote them, but because of what they represent: clarity under pressure, responsibility in the face of fear, and commitment to cause without the shield of slogans. They are also a reminder that political movements are not built solely through speeches and events, but through day-to-day acts of writing, reflecting, and communicating with others.

It is hoped that this translation serves both as a resource and a record—one that remains accessible, reliable, and useful for future readers and researchers.

— Arqam Khawaja

Letter 01: Maqbool Bhat to G. M. Mufti

Peshawar, 17 August[1]
Respected Mufti Sahab,

Asalamualaikum!

I got your letter along with the letter of Mr. Beigh, I wanted to reply to both of you, but couldn't do it due to some important and unavoidable circumstances. Rest Allah knows. I want to write to you from the core of my heart but I don't know why my mind is out of words. I was thinking, as I am writing after a long time, I should concentrate on some important lines but at the same time I feel like I should write a long story which would make me feel at ease and lift this weight off my heart but alas, you yourself know the reasons very well.

Oh yes! You had talked about some important issues in your letter. I would advise you to continue the Rawalpindi letter and book. Else neither you would benefit nor would the other party. Why should both burn in the fire for no reason? At least the soul would be at ease. Rest remains your work, which will be done. I had asked you to take a leave for 10-15 days and come visit me. Let's see what Allah has written in your destiny. One of the works is in our hands to do. Once you come, we'll start its process. We will get money and you will get married also.

Nowadays I feel gloomy, perhaps because there's nothing to do. Until now Air Force hasn't given a decision and neither has your Azad Kashmir. They are unnecessarily testing our patience. There's no confirmation of what is happening or what will happen. I was thinking if I had to live in Peshawar then I would take admission in LLB. What are your thoughts on it?

I had also received a letter from Khaliq Parvez. He was persuading me to join him and also informed me about the starting of his of depot in Mirpur. His words were filled with respect. He had written that he would visit Peshawar after earning some money from the depot but perhaps he is still struggling, that's why he hasn't been able to pay a visit. He did not revert to my reply.

And yes, maybe any decision hasn't been taken on our appeal yet. What's the reason for it? I'll end it here this time. Because of my writer's block and low mood. Maybe your next letter would cheer me up. Do write.

Your well wisher,
Mohammad Maqbool

————————————————————————————

1. *(Maqbool Bhat hasn't written the year on this letter. It is assumed that the letter was written on 17 August, 1959 because as per the letter Maqbool had neither taken admission in any university nor did he have a job. It is a personal letter to his friend G. M.*

Mufti in which he talks about personal things and also advises his friend regarding his marriage. It is understood by the content of this letter that in these days Maqbool was trying to get a job in Pakistan Air Force or in Azad Kashmir. Maqbool Bhat had also asked for advice from his friend for pursuing LLB.)

Letter 02: Maqbool Bhat to G. M. Mufti

Peshawar
22 May 1960

Brother Mufti, Peace be upon you!

I received your letter a few days ago but wasn't able to respond for two days. As you know, my exams are approaching, and I'm thinking about taking studies a bit more seriously nowadays[1]. Still, somehow, I spend most of my time daydreaming. Nonetheless, the urge to studying has become strong. I intentionally didn't reply to your letter any earlier, not that it wasn't important, but because you had left for a long journey, first to Kaghan and then to Rawalpindi. I was of the opinion that writing to you would be fruitless, until you will stop at some station.

Brother, while reading your letter, on one hand I laugh and on the other, my eyes become full of tears. I turn my laughter into a sweet poison. Recently, I got a letter from a poet friend[2], from Kashmir. He has written it as such that it reminded me of all the painful memories of past again. I was unwell and in sensuous for few days. Now tell me, what option do I have other than weeping? Your order is put into practice but, your program of delaying Nikah needs a second thought[3].

If you can meet then we will talk. My visit to Pindi for now is impossible because the truth is that I can't spare time even for a second. I have decided not to go anywhere out until my exams are done. That's why I want you to visit, and please, do visit. Also, talk to Chirag-Ud-Din[4] about the important things. Rather, bring samples and rates with you. Nylon and Lady Hamilton[5] is what you would usually find. Anyway, in this matter you should gather necessary details yourself. There is no need for me to come there.

Rest, the mental stress you are in, you should get it out of your head. A human is always put to trials but the ability to deal with it successfully is what defines us. Keep working without any fear, inform me about the consequences of the appeal you have made[6]. Perhaps Allah will make the decision in your favor. I will pray for your success. If I can be of any help, then I'm ready to do it.

Don't think that you are alone in this, when the time comes you will get guidance. But do pay me a visit. All problems will be discussed here. Oh, I forgot to tell you one thing, today when I went to the office of *Anjaam*, Maqbool Kashmiri[7] was reading something in his poetic way on the office window. Maybe a Romanian novel. Khair, he looked at me for no reason as I knew he would, so I greeted him with a *Salam* and gave him the message from your letter. He said to me, "Dear *Postman, thank you*" and I replied "*To be a postman of a dear and true friend is better than getting familiar with a particular friend, who like a flower provides nectar to different bees.*" What would that fool have understood anyway? ***(Editor's note: read the footnotes for context)***

A notice has been published in 'Kohistaan' which states that sending letters to occupied Kashmir is now permissible officially. Don't know how true it is. If true, then it would be great.

Friend, since you left, life has not been the same[8]. Another friend from Kashmir has written some couplet, let me write it down for you:

Tum bhi hotay, hum bhi laatay taab-e-gham,
Ye jehnum zaar ban jata aram.
Purkashish pursoaz bhi hai aur nafees,
Yaad aayi hai tumhari hum jalees.

Hagroo sahib[9] has sent two letters and I'm expecting a third letter soon. Friend, do me a favor, if you meet Ghulam Nabi Mir[10] then extend my greetings to him and make a complaint on my regard, that I had written a letter to him but his reply never arrived. Give him my address and tell him that it's now his turn to write to me. Tell him to write his accurate address in the letter too. I had written him a letter on his "University Book Depot" address. Don't know if he got it or not. If he got it then why didn't he reply?

I'll keep writing to you. It's 1º Clock in the night right now. Copy is ready, I'll give it a look and leave the office[10]. Then I'll sleep for the night and get busy with some other work tomorrow. Brother give my Salam to your friends.

Well Wisher,
Muhammad Maqbool Bhat

————————————————————————————

1. *Maqbool Bhat Shaheed were pursuing MA from Peshawar university during these days.*
2. *Information about this poet friend of Maqbool Bhat Shaheed couldn't be found.*
3. *G.M. Mufti wanted to go to occupied Kashmir and that's why delayed his Nikah ceremony.*
4. *Chirag-ud-din was a Kashmiri tailor master in Rawalpindi. Maqbool Bhat had promised his friend G.M Mufti that he would get his clothes made from Chirag-Ud-Din at a low cost.*
5. *These were two types of clothes which were popular among the women during those days.*
6. *G.M. Mufti were deprived of his monthly grant by Pindi Garden college after he was arrested for being a part of the KLM movement. Mufti had made an appeal for resuming his monthly grant.*

7. *Maqbool Kashmiri was an agent of the secret agency. He was also working at Roznama Amroz. He originally belonged from Baramulla.*
8. *At the end of 1959, G.M. Mufti spent at least 6 months with Maqbool Bhat at Peshawar.*
9. *Hagroo Sahib probably was Maqbool Bhat's classmate.*
10. *Ghulam Nabhi Mir belonged to Muzaffarabad. He has passed away.*
11. *Maqbool Bhat Shaheed worked as a Sub-editor in a daily newspaper named Anjaam.*

Letter 03: Maqbool Bhat to Abdul Khaliq Ansari

Rex Hotel, Rawalpindi
22nd December 1970

Respected Abdul Khaliq Ansari Sahib,

Greetings,

I hope you are in good health. Considering the shifting political landscape of Pakistan, I have summoned a few friends to Lahore on Sunday, the 27th of December, for consultations regarding the party's political campaign and to deliberate on some crucial matters. Your presence at this gathering is essential.

God willing, I will visit your residence in Mirpur at any time after noon on the 26th of December, so that we may depart for Lahore together. I am fully mindful of your health concerns, yet the present circumstances demand that we move forward with urgency, lest our destination remain distant. I trust that you will bear this slight inconvenience.

If you find it appropriate, you may also persuade Chaudhry Shehbaz Khan[1] Sahib and Sufi Muhammad Zaman to join us. I believe their presence would prove beneficial.

Yours sincerely,
Mohammad Maqbool Bhat

————————————————————————————

1. *Chaudhry Shehbaz Khan currently resides in the United Kingdom*

Letter 04: Maqbool Bhat to Dr. Farooq Haider

Kot Lakhpat Jail,
Lahore 15 September 1972

Esteemed brother Asalamualaikum,

It has been quite some time since I received your letter. But I could not answer because of the Court holidays, and a friend who had to leave for Rawalpindi couldn't do so. I sincerely apologize for the delay in my response.

Your concern for the intensified strictness and the ever-increasing limitations in this prison is appreciable. But you need not care. This prison is after all a prison only. And as far as the handcuffs are concerned, my heart is fond of these 'ornaments'. You may not believe it, but I am now very much fond of these handcuffs. I have now turned into a Jail Bird.

It is a different matter that Mehtab Bagh *[Extra detail: Bagh-i-Mehtab, an area in the neighborhood was used as an interrogation camp by the police before 1980s]*, Srinagar Central Jail, Muzaffarabad Dalai Camp, and the infamous Shahi Qila of Lahore *[Lahore fort – which served as a torture center]* could not break my resolve, and could not extinguish the fire of truth. These hardships of imprisonment are a mere ritual. They do not trouble me much. Moreover, these days I am locked in my cell round the clock, and except for these few minutes of our court presentation that we spend together with other inmates, I spend most of my time locked in this cell, as per the orders of jail authorities.

The prisons of this country are weird institutions, where the day-to-day routines and customs that we are supposed to follow are changed every single time some jail authorities are changed. When the masters of these prisons arrive in their splendid manner, with an air of pride, they somewhat derive pleasure from the cruelties meted out to the prisoners here. These people have a wicked frame of mind.

Who can make these ignorants of the 20th century, who have a false sense of pride over their unreal abilities, understand that their conduct, their rules and regulations, and their laws are nothing but a meaningless show, and the false pride that they derive from this meaningless show is nothing but an absurdity. Anyway, this 'game' has a dimension of fun and entertainment to it. But the condition is that one needs to be mentally and physically aware in order to extract fun from this show. And as far as the chains of darkness and ignorance are concerned, the are made only to be broken one day, and the truth shines bright.

You mentioning the cold breeze of Pindi in your letter revived in me the burning sensation of Lahore's extreme heat. The perception of heat and cold is almost over in me now. These sensations are now only an old tale, which are only alive in my memories. Especially after

being acquainted with the skin burning heat of Dera Ismail Khan, I am reminded of this Persian sha'ar, where the poet has very well said:

Hooran i behshati Ra dozakh bod a'araf Az dozakhiyan pars a'araf behshat arz

[For the inhabitants of paradise, the a'raf (purgatory, a separation between heaven and hell) is equivalent to hell itself, but for the inhabitants of hell, a'raf is equivalent to the paradise]

This difficult stage of hardships is really long. I think that these pointless procedures will reach their conclusion by the end of November. But the real verdict will come from the battlefield, no matter in whose favour the ink from the pens of these enemies of justice flows.

I enjoyed reading your poem. They were to a great extent relevant to the present circumstances. If the foolish torch- bearers of conservatism and the reactionaries, who are an impediment to making progress, do not take lessons from these verses, then one can do nothing but pity their misfortune.

Please accept my felicitations on the completion of the construction of your new house. Both of the names that you have chosen are beautiful. But I personally liked "Mahaz Manzil" a little more. Anyway, whatever you choose is my choice as well. It would be better for you to shift there. We have a great deal of affection for that place in our hearts.

It has been a long time since I've seen my children. Last time I heard, they were staying at Maqbool Sahab's house.

I once again thank you for your concern for me. Convey my greetings to all our friends and acquaintances.

Also send my Salaams to Bhabhi Sahiba and Azra and Mizu.

With greetings of love from a friend.

Yours brother,
Mohammad Maqbool Bhat

————————————————————————————

1. *(Dr. Farooq Haider was a very close friend of Maqbool Bhat, and an important political associate. He was in regular contact with Maqbool Bhat, even during his imprisonment in Tihar Jail. He supported Maqbool through thick and thin. He sacrificed his wealth and committed his life to the cause, and even had to go endure difficult times in prisons. Shaheed Maqbool Bhat wrote several letters to this close friend of his, and referred to him as his 'Baradar Aziz'. Farooq Haider was a doctor by profession, but was active on various fronts for liberation of the homeland. He was a resident of Rawalpindi, and passed away in 2009 Maqbool Bhat wrote this letter to*

Dr Farooq Haider from Kot Lakhpat Jail in Lahore, where he was under imprisonment in connection with the Ganga Hijacking Case.)

Letter 05: Maqbool Bhat to Yusuf Zargar

Camp Jail, Lahore,
30 January, 1973

Brother Zargar Sahib Assalamu Alaikum,

Believe me that it is because of you and your love that in these dark and gloomy dungeons of misery, the lamps of hope are still glowing. It is not possible that you wouldn't be present in my thoughts for even a moment. The love and affection of friends like you, and the passion for sacrifice and selflessness is my greatest asset. An asset that one can be proud of, and greatly rely upon.

Recently Naseem Sahab [1] along with Abdullah [2], paid me a visit. They delivered to me your message of love, and your priceless gift [3], which I believe you sent to refresh in me the memories of days gone by.

You see, these memories of the past are fascinating – so beautiful that I feel pride in them, but at the same time, they are so full of pain and sadness that my heart seethes with grief.

Keep aside the recent political affiliations, your message of love has stirred a tempest in the ocean of memories. I spent hours lost in this great sea, lost in memories of the days when we in the spirit of our youth, and with outstanding devotion, used to participate to the best of our abilities in the struggle for freedom of our subjugated homeland. The memories of the beautiful city [4] that gave birth to you and prosperity to me, are still alive in me. The streets where once upon a time you used to jubilantly shout slogans of Aazadi, where you in your spirit of truthfulness used to cheerfully endure the cruelty of the enemies of Aazadi.

By Allah, the pale beams of sunlight that fall upon this sorrowed and turbulent city, its desolate ambience, and its doors and walls will bear witness to Yousuf's [5], Mufti's [6], Parvez's [7], and Abdullah's [8] love and zeal, their unfeigned affinity to the idea of liberation, and the troubles they faced in this struggle for Aazadi. What else can be a source of pride for me, other than the fact that I got the opportunity to be a part of this active and spirited fraternity, and that I was the recipient of their kindness and affection. How can one forget the moments when Yousuf and Abdullah received lashes on their bare backs, and were imprisoned in Srinagar, their crime being the passion for Aazadi?

Or how can the pain felt on the forced exile [9] of Parvez and Mufti be forgotten? Can the love and affection be forgotten, which were a part of Badru's [10], Hawabaz's[11]and Professor Maqbool Ahmad Sheikh's [12] pristine political character?

Only Allah knows the plight of this prisoner, who is sitting in a corner of this cage. Albeit, what else can be a source of consolation other than the memories of companionships of the past, replete with memories of love. One by one, the memories from this vast treasure keep coming to my mind. It is not possible to describe all of them. I'm afraid that in the process of

penning down the memories, each word that comes out of the tip of the pen carries with it the burden of sorrow, which will distress your heart. Thus, I will stop for now.

It is true that the relation between you and me is to some extent political, and you would be surprised by the apolitical things i have mentioned till now. But you cannot deny the bond of love and friendship between us, which existed even at the time when you joined our rival political group [13]. I am sure that even during those times, you had nothing but love and compassion for me in your heart. Thereafter, when we were set on the same political ideology, and you in your peculiar joviality joined our group in Muzaffarabad expressing your love in the form of tears. Those years will be an everlasting ornament to our boundless friendship.

I received the Kulchas you sent via Abdullah. This gift of yours may seem to be a mere thing meant to eaten, but you cannot imagine that in this state of imprisonment far from my homeland, their aroma and taste seems astonishing. When I first reached Baramulla in Occupied Kashmir in connection with the National Liberation Front (NLF), this great friend of mine whose sincere love and companionship was with me even during the time I was under arrest, and on whose bright face used to be a beautiful smile even during the storms of pain and agony, on the very first day he asked from me my favourite foodstuff. He thought that 8 years of exile from my homeland would have changed my tastes. I replied that Namkeen Chai, Kulcha, and Saag were assured on my part, and in addition whatever his wish. He was taken by a surprise and to some extent thought of my demand as a display of modesty. But when I pressingly told him of my longing and desire for these eatables from my homeland, and made him aware that in these moments of respite, one's longing and infatuation for these familiar things from the past increases manifold, he finally had to give in and agree. This friend of mine, who had always been an elegant host, Janab Ghulam Muhammad Shameem [14], who we even in our student days used to respectfully address as "Ghulam Muhammad Sahab", had to give up the traditional Kashmiri way of hospitality for me.

I think I have written too long a letter in a spate of emotions. I didn't even consider that it might bore you. But due to the bond that we share, my heart didn't want me to stop. Keep me informed of the milieu in Muzaffarabad. How are our other friends and fellows, and how is Lala [15]? How are Akbar Sahab [16], Qureshi Sahab [17], Nazir Sahab, and Hanif Sahab[18]?

Are Jaseeb Ju[19]and Bashir Ahmad Lone [20] Sahab doing fine? What is Abdul Sattar [21] doing these days? Convey my greetings to all these beloved friends. Send my salaams to Abdul Gaffar Reshi [22], Maqbool Naik [23]], and if possible, to Mohammad Yaseen [24]]as well.

Shall I have faith that in your presence the lamp of Tehreek-e-Azadi that we lit with our blood will continue to glow even in the storms of hostility and animosity, and with its light will continue to guide those who seek the truth on the correct path? If that is the case, then the hardships me and my fellows are facing in this prison are not in the least painful for us. Please remember to convey my greetings to Irshad Sahab and Mufti Sahab too.

Keep informing me of your well being. I sincerely hope that you and Bhabi Ji would be happy and gleeful.

Your Brother
Mohammad Maqbool Bhat

————————————————————————————

1. *Naseem Lone, a resident of Gujranwala, was one of the close friends of Maqbool Bhat.*
2. *Abdullah was a resident of Muzaffarabad, PaK*
3. *Yusuf Zargar had sent Kashmiri Kulche for Maqbool Bhat*
4. *Baramulla, a town in Indian Occupied Kashmir.*
5. *Yusuf Zargar*
6. *GM Mufti, a close companion of Maqbool Bhat.*
7. *Parvez was from Baranulla*
8. *Abdullah had to face a lot of hardships for taking part in the freedom struggle*
9. *Parvez and G.M Mufti had been expelled from Kashmir for taking part in pro freedom activities.*
10. *Ghulam Mohiuddin Badru was a resident of Baramulla, who rendered many sacrifices for the sake of freedom*
11. *Ghulam Qadir Hawabaz*
12. *Prof. Maqbool Ahmad Sheikh was a professor in Baramulla college, who played an important role in creating awareness about the freedom struggle amongst the youth.*
13. *[Yusuf Sheikh initially joined Muslim Conference, but later when Maqbool Bhat was made the President of Mahaz-i-Raishumari, he joined Maqbool's group.*
14. *Ghulam Muhammad Shameem Bhat was a resident of Baramulla, and a friend of Maqbool Bhat.*
15. *Ghulam-ud-Din Lala was the owner of Pakistan Hotel, Muzaffarabad.*
16. *Akbar was from Muzaffarabad.*
17. *Rashid Qureshi was a member of the Mahaz.*
18. *Hanif was a member of the Mahaz.*
19. *Inspired by Maqbool Bhat's political ideology, he also became a part of the Mahaz.*
20. *Bashir Ahmad Lone was a resident of Muzaffarabad, and a close associate of Maqbool Bhat.*
21. *Abdul Sattar was the owner of Kashmir Shawl house.*
22. *Abdul Gaffar Reshi was from Indian Occupied Kashmir.*
23. *Maqbool Naik played an active role in the freedom struggle.*
24. *Muhammad Yaseen was a resident of Azad Kashmir. When Maqbool Bhat escaped from Central Jail Srinagar in 1968, Muhammad Yaseen was also accompanying him.*

Letter 06: Maqbool Bhat to Azra (Daughter)

Lahore,
12 April 1972.

Dear Azra Beitee (daughter),

May god always protect …. you. Your younger sister Rubina visited me on 26th March with your auntie (Maqbool Butt's wife) and gave me your letter.

As we were transferred from Kamelpur Prison to Camp Prison Lahore, it took me a little longer to write back to you. Although we were imprisoned here on a previous occasion but still the change caused various problems which kept me from writing to you earlier. Having read your views, I cannot explain in words how admirable and esteemed they were. Your letter shows that God has gifted you with the wealth of sensitivity at this young age. This is a great gift.

After reading your letter, I could not help thinking how sensitive you are and how much you are alert about the difficulty we are currently going through. I pray to God that he may increase your power of imagination and understanding and enrich the strength of feelings you have about our enslaved nation. May Allah enable you to become a daughter of Kashmir we could take pride in.

Dear Azra, I am aware that the problems we are experiencing have hurt you. I know that you have directly felt the pain and torture of imprisonment we experienced because your father (Ghulam Mohammed Mir) was with us during the stormy period. Your father's imprisonment brought the innocent faces of you and Rubina before my eyes, like two flower buds. I did fear that the wave of torture and oppression (brought upon us may depress you two. I remember the days when you and Rubina used to play with Papu (Javed Maqbool Butt) and Kaku (Shaukat Maqbool Butt) in the pleasant environment of Abbottabad, unaware of all the issues around you. Who else can bear the sight of tears in the beautiful eyes of innocent children like you, but those heartless enemies of our movement?

The helplessness you felt out there kept us restless here inside the prison walls. But we faced every form of torture with the belief that this (new) challenge we are facing may temporarily deprive you of the love and affection you need but it will ultimately bring revolution to your thinking. That is exactly what has happened. Your letter has strengthened this belief of mine.

Now, let me explain to you how oppression affects the children of those who fight against it as opposed to those who are the oppressors. The children of the oppressors see the oppression around them but remain indifferent, whereas the children of Mujahids (freedom fighters) do not tolerate oppression. They feel the pain and wish to fight against oppression. The children of oppressors are provided with all the luxuries and comfort of the world, they

have plenty to eat, (wear) expensive clothes and live in luxury houses but the children of Mujahids are not attracted to these kind of luxuries and comfort. They get satisfaction from struggling against the system of oppression. That gratification and satisfaction cannot be experienced with worldly wealth, expensive clothes or luxurious houses. That is why Mujahideen children prefer a day of freedom to a life of luxuries without any freedom. My dear child, the children of all the enslaved nations in the world not only have to suffer the oppression and suppression by tyrants, but also have to fight shoulder to shoulder, with their elders for freedom (from it). Slavery is such an evil where no discrimination is made between children, young and old. In slavery (situations) children are also affected by the torture and misery endured by their elders.

I will tell you a few incidents from history, which spell the hardship some children in our country had to suffer because of forced subjugation. It was around 1945 or 1946 when I was 8 or 9 years old. At that time the Dogras ruled Kashmir and the whole of Kashmiri nation was living under slavery conditions. One of the cruel forms of slavery is the feudal system. In this system the ruler or the king distributes land amongst his loyalists, who in turn become an instrument in carrying out the oppressive measure against ordinary people for him. It is this service which is awarded by the rulers through land distribution. These lands or fields are called Jagirs. The Jagirdars, the owners, do not offer any labour or till the fields. The work of tilling, seeding, growing the crops is done by the local peasants.

All a Jagirdar does is to appear at the harvest time and take all the produce leaving a minute quantity for the peasants to live on. This Jagirdari system existed in our country during the Dogra rule too. The poor peasants had to do all the hard work but the landowner would take all the produce. The landowner in our area was called Divan, whom we had seldom seen. There were his agents called kardaar, whose job it was to collect grain and fruits etc once produced by the farmers. The year I am talking about had crops were poor due to bad weather. This left the farming families with very little to give to the Divan. Having given away all the produce it did not mount up to the usual season's quantity, which brought the whole area under the wrath of his agents. They started a series of crackdowns on the houses and stores of the poor peasants and many were whipped. When it did not produce results the Divan himself came to our village in a motorcade. This was the first time ever a motorcade came to our village.

We were all amazed to see it. All the farmers in our village got together and pleaded before him for concession. They told him in detail the reasons for the low harvest but he did not believe them. He insisted upon having his usual share of the crops even if it meant that the children of the peasants had to starve to death. He also expressed his anger towards his agents and strictly instructed them to extract the full share. These agents knew very well that the peasants were left with nothing to be given to the Divan. But had no courage to argue with their master. As the jagirdar went to his car after giving instructions all the children of the village were told to lie down on the road in front of the car by their elders.

The kardaar was also part of this plan. Hundreds of village children lied down in front of the Jagirdar's car and pleaded for concession and to write off the extra share or drive over them. I was one of those children and remember to this day the fear and chaos that ruled us. Everyone, young and old was in tears.

They knew that if jagirdar left without giving concessions their lives would be made hell. Eventually, the jagirdar agreed to some amendments to his final decision.

This is just one incident that can give you some idea of the miserable conditions we the children of the poor Kashmiri peasants suffered during that period of slavery. Majority of our people were and still are peasants who suffer similar situations all around.

They were forced to leave the country in search for work in the plains of Pakistan and India mainly in Punjab where they were referred to as Hattoos (luggage carriers). They used to work there for six months in a year and make small money to support their children and families. The other manual artisans and small vendors were also forced to leave their homes for various towns and cities across the subcontinent to sell their products. While they were away their children longed for the love and affection of their fathers. When this reality of slavery was realised by our nation (people), it was clearly thought that the only way to emancipate from the exploitation of the feudal system and to live an honorable life is to fight for freedom.

The fight initially began in 1931. In this fight there were two camps. In the one camp were the subjugated and wretched peoples of Kashmir and in the other were the rulers and their puppet officials, feudal lords and capitalists. The first phase of this battle was concluded in 1947. Scores of poor children had to sacrifice their parents and families who were killed in this battle. Thousands of young girls like yourself had to live away from their fathers who were locked up behind the bars by those who defended slavery and exploitation. Then came the flood of 1947.

During these stormy periods the situation took such a turn that we entered from one phase of slavery to another. Dogra-rule came to an end but in the process our country was divided. One part went under occupation of Indian army while the other though called Azad (free) has none of the features of a free place. During this chaos hundreds of thousands of old and young as well as children were martyred. The blood of those unaccountable children along with the older members of our nation flows into the plains of Jammu and Valley, in the hills of Poonch, Muzaffarabad and Mirpur in the mountains and of Kargil and Ladakh. No monuments of these children can be found but these anonymous martyrs are the pride of our nation. To be able to tell all the stories of these young martyred boys and girls of our freedom struggle it requires a massive book. Here I want to tell you only one fact that the invaders murdered countless children just like those merciless hunters who kill the sprinkling sparrows on trees during spring.

Some of these children were killed with spears and swords by the communalist intoxicated with the influence of sectarianism as herds of sheep are torn apart by the bloodthirsty wolves.

My dear child, 1947 was not the end of that era of sacrifices by the children of our nation. It is continuing even today and may (well) continue till the whole nation is liberated. Our people are continuously making sacrifices both in the occupied Kashmir (IOK) as well as in Azad Kashmir (POK). On both sides children are growing under the horrifying shadows of slavery. Countless Kashmiri children have become orphans (without any one to care of them) because of the destruction and killings inflicted upon us by the enemies of our freedom. Consequently, they have been deprived of the essential provisions for the (good) growth and upbringing of children. The details of those past events are too long to be told here. Recently, two young boys were killed in London. They too were the flowers of our nations. Basharat and Hanif of Mirpur who had sacrificed their youthful lives not only remind us of our history and tradition but also set an example for the future. Every child of our nation should be proud of them.

Dear Azra, I have written all that to clarify what agony children of slave nations have to go through. It is also important that you know these details because you have a great passion for the freedom our country, which is obvious from your quoting the couplet in your letter, which states

[Khudda Ney Aaj Takk Uss Qaoum Ki Hallat Nahein Badlee Naa Ho Jiss Ko Khiaal Aap Apni Hallat Kay Badlane Ka]

God may never help any nation which does not realise itself to change its outlook.

Also, your determination is praiseworthy because you have expressed in your letter that: “We will not refrain from giving the last drop of our blood for the freedom, sovereignty and prosperity of our beloved Kashmir.” I am greatly impressed by this passion in you. May Allah keep you on the right path, enhance your mind and fulfil your aspirations.

Now let me comment on some of your other views, which you have described in your letter. You say that you know the details of difficulties and oppression we went through, which makes one’s heart sink but there are such stonehearted and ignorant people who enjoy and make fun of such stories. We must remember that only those peoples feel the pain in stories of repression who have themselves suffered or fought against it. The hard-hearted people or those who have not suffered would not understand such stories.

They neither enjoy nor are saddened. However, there is a class of people who take pleasure in such stories. This is the (class of) repressors and their quislings. If people laugh at the torture and oppression, we suffered for the freedom of our country then you can be sure they are the enemy of freedom of whole Kashmiri nation. They are the supporters of repression and enemy of justice and rights. Such people never last long and usually face

humiliation within their lifetime. The righteous people always rise victorious with truth and justice. At the end such people look at themselves and are shamed.

You have also written that Kashmiris have sacrificed their lives for Pakistan but Pakistan brands them as 'agents'. Here, your views are slightly misplaced. It is not Pakistan that accuses Kashmiris of spying but the ruling traitors of this country. It is the same bunch of rulers who has denied the peoples of this country freedom and democracy and eventually disintegrated it. Indeed, the role these bunch of traitors have played has been far worse than spies. That is why they brand all patriotic (Kashmiris) and friends of (our) people as foreign agents or spies. These rulers who committed crimes against their own people and called authentic leaders as 'agents', accuse us (Kashmiris) of spying but we should not get angry. As for the actual Pakistan, the people of this country are concerned they will accept the truth when it is brought before them. The sentence given to us is not the (work of) real Pakistanis.

The cruel (men) of ruling (class) who open fire on their own people are responsible for our sentence. Obviously, the rulers who declared war against their own peoples cannot offer anything to anyone else but injustice. Pakistani ruling class never ever supported Kashmiris in their fight for freedom, as they should have done. Indeed, this class has no interest in the freedom of Kashmir. Whatever they say is merely a lip service and must not be trusted.

However, the peoples of Pakistan are our true supporters and friends. We will certainly have their support. The (ordinary) people of Pakistan have sincerity as well as sympathy for us. Whenever Kashmiris move forward the peoples of Pakistan will support them. You are right that by branding Kashmiri freedom fighters as 'agents' these rulers have actually served India. Perhaps it is the result of this hypocrisy (double policy) that they (Pakistani rulers) are faced with a humiliation at the end.

You (say that you) are happy about our determination to stand up for (our) right and did not give up the just cause during these challenges. This has only been possible with God's blessings by keeping us on the right path though out. Please pray to the almighty Allah that we stay on the right path in the future. Only then the National Liberation Front (NLF), Inshallah, will achieve bigger and greater successes.

The suggestion that 'Kashmiris have been brought to the point of 'neither here nor there' is a mistake. We were the true sons of the soil; we are and will remain so. The passion (flame) for freedom we possess will remain in us forever.

We will confront any force on earth that may come in our way in order to achieve our freedom. As you have rightly pointed out, the blood Kashmiris have given for the freedom of our country will never be wasted in vain. The blood of (our) martyrs brings the goal for freedom nearer. You are quite right that those who fight for the right and just cause have to go through tests and trials. Yes, that is what makes them so noble – as they face all such challenges with patience and courage.

The prayer, which rises from the bottom of your innocent heart will surely be answered by the God almighty, as it is his promise to mankind that no power on earth can fail them as long as they are on the right path.

Rubina and Papoo tell me about your good health and that you are paying proper attention to your education. You (may) know that real power and wealth human beings may possess is the knowledge they acquire. This wealth can neither be stolen nor spent. Without 'knowledge' human beings are mere animals. That is why I hope that you will give even more attention to your studies.

Give my regards to your Ammee Jaan and lots of love to Beitee Rubina.

Mohammad, Maqbool Bhat

Letter 07: Maqbool Bhat to Showkat Maqbool (Son)

New Delhi [1]
13 May, 1979

Dear Showkat Maqbool,

Asalamualaikum

I hope that you are doing good. I recently met your father in the jail. Bhai Jaan is totally fine and is hoping the same for you. The letter that you dispatched on 28 February 1979 didn't reach him on time. He received it very late, in the first week of May. But due to some circumstance sin the Jail, he cannot respond to you at this moment. He will send you a letter as soon as the jail authorities give him some relaxations. For the time being, you can take this letter as a signal of his well being. I am more or less writing this letter in your father's words only.

Bhaijaan was elated on knowing that all of you are fine, and he is always praying for your well being. He was also glad to know that you and your brother's (Javaid Maqbool) education is underway. He hopes that you and your brother will focus well on your studies and remain engrossed in it, because education is a treasure which is always by your side and no matter what happens, never goes waste. Bhai jaan hopes that the hardships and troubles he is going through would not affect your life negatively, rather you should face the difficulties with courage and determination. Whatever be the result, you should not be hopeless about Allah's rahmat (blessings), and should hope that He will do good to you. You should never forget that life and death are all in His control, and as long as a person remains firm on his Eimaan, he emerges as the final winner. What kind of a person is he who bows before these difficulties and gives up? Make endurance and courage your hallmark, and face the difficulties with all your might.

Bhaijaan is certainly pained by the fact that at this stage of life, when you needed his love and guidance, he is not present with you, rather lying in this faraway prison. Not only this, what also troubles him is that the difficulties and tribulations he himself is going through are a great source of worry and inconvenience to you. Nonetheless, he is hopeful that you will endure these difficulties with patience and courage, and will continue your efforts to tread on the path of success in life.

Convey Bhaijaan's greetings to esteemed Chacha Jaan (Abdul Aziz Bhat), Chachi Jaan (Hajirah Bibi), Bhabhi Raja (Raja Begum), and Bhabhi Zakirah (Raja begum and Zakira were Maqbool Bhat's wives, he has referred to them as Bhabhi because he wrote this letter in his brother's name), and other nears and dears, and send his affectionate greeting to Papu (Javaid, Showkat's elder brother), Sobi (Saeedah – paternal cousin), Rafia, and Munni.

Also remember to convey his greetings to Sister Hameedah (paternal cousin) and her husband. Moreover, he has also sent his Salaams to your Maamu Master Sahib (Master Mohammad Maqbool), Khala Fatima (Master Mohammad Maqbool's wife), Abdul Gaffar (Master Maqbool's nephew), and Bhabhi Fahmeeda (Master Maqbool's wife). Also convey his Salaams to Riyaz Ahmad's brothers and sisters.

Dispatch your response to the New Delhi Central Jail address so that Bhaijaan is assured that you received his letter. Moreover, send greeting to all friends and relatives on my behalf as well. Ensure that you continue writing letters to your father so as to keep him informed of your wellbeing, and remember to mention your studies and other important issues pertaining to the family in your letters. Send greetings to your Abu's friends also.

Wassalam

Your uncle Ghulam Nabi,
and your father Mohammad Maqbool

————————————————————————————

1. *(Maqbool Bhat wrote his first letter from Tihar Jail to his son Showkat Maqbool Bhat. Due to being in a state of strict imprisonment and due to some serious necessities, Maqbool Bhat wrote this letter himself, but in the name of his younger brother Ghulam Nabi. He has addressed his son pretending to be his uncle. Throughout the letter, the word "Bhaijaan" refers to Maqbool Bhat himself. Maqbool Bhat handed over this letter to his brother for him to take it out of the jail, so that even if caught by jail authorities while checking, the letter would be in Ghulam Nabi's name and not his own.)*

Letter 08: Maqbool Bhat to Begum Farooq Haider

New Delhi
31st June 1979

Assalamu Alaikum, My dear sister, Iffat

I hope that you and brother Farooq are well. With Allah's grace and mercy, the days of my life are going well with patience and gratitude and by your prayers and good wishes difficulties and hardships are reaching their destination with a content heart.

The memories of meeting with you ages ago are still fresh in my mind. The way you have fulfilled the right of hosting a guest with sincerity and love and the warmth and passion with which Farooq Bhai made brief stay heartwarming, all of it is engraved in my mind. I have still not forgotten little Prince's stumbling voice and Azra and Mezu's playfulness. It is my compulsion that has forced me to stay here away from my family. Although this new life in any aspect is not agreeable nor comfortable but when a question mark is raised upon a person's belief and viewpoint, without caring about the finality of the outcome, one gets relieved only after going through difficult times.

Believe me, in these hard and pressing times of my life neither my belief nor my confidence has gone low, my Imaan (Faith) has not dwindled even by an ounce. If your prayers remain inclusive then this phase will surely pass with success and victory too. I was worried because I hadn't received any letter of well-being from your side since long. Ghulam Sahab and Hasrat Sahab remembered me on the previous Eid and recently even little Shaukat had composed a letter from Peshawar. I have sent my reply to him but do not know if he has received it. Iman Bhai is staying in London nowadays; I haven't heard from him since long. He hasn't replied to my letter either. Seems life has kept him busy.

Give my Salaams to all of your kith and kin. To Gogi Goshi… and all other relatives of Farooq Bhai too. Give my heartwarming love to the little prince, Azra and Munazza and my earnest wishes for little prince's younger brother. I have forgotten his name, please do mention it in the next letter.

I hope this exchange of letters continues.

Your brother,
Mohammad Maqbool Bhat

Letter 09: Maqbool Bhat to Abdul Aziz Bhat (Uncle)

Central Jail, New Delhi
19th September 1979

Respected Uncle,

Assalamu Alaikum,

I hope this letter finds you in good health. I recently received a letter from Aunt, written on 29th July. Around the same time, my brother Ghulam Nabi also visited me. Through his words and your letter, I learned about the current situation. I deeply feel your difficulties and hardships.[1] It pains me that at a time when I should be by your side, sharing your burdens and offering my support, I am far away and unable to stand with you in your troubles. But do not worry—this time of trial will soon pass by the grace of God. One should never lose hope in His mercy, and I firmly believe that He will guide our ship safely out of this storm and towards our desired destination. Keep your trust in Him and continue your prayers. I am confident that your sincere prayers will surely be answered.

You mentioned in your letter about selling the house. My brother Ghulam Nabi is preparing the power of attorney, and as soon as the legal formalities are completed, it will be sent to you in your name. Please do not worry about this matter. In this regard, kindly consider the following suggestions from my side:

1. When selling the house, ensure that you demand a reasonable price. Under no circumstances should it be sold for less than one lakh and twenty-five thousand rupees.[2]

2. From the sale amount, keep ten thousand rupees for your personal expenses and pay two thousand rupees to Pir Abdullah Shah of Landi Kotal.[3]

3. Deposit the remaining amount in our bank account. The number of my bank account is available at home.

It would be deeply distressing for me if you were to divide the money prematurely and act on your personal whims. I believe that within a year or two, my case will reach a decision. Only after that should we consider the future. If I am released and return to you, I will personally decide on the children's future. And if it is destined that I attain martyrdom, I will provide you with the necessary advice on how to distribute this money among all the children.

I want to ensure that Shafiq, Sabiha, and Ruqaiya continue their education and that their future is secured alongside Javed, Shaukat, and Lubna. With this in mind, I do not favour the unfair distribution of funds. Until my case is resolved, the ten thousand rupees for your expenses should be sufficient. You can also rent a small house temporarily to manage for a while. If Raja and Zakira [4] wish to stay with you, that would be preferable; otherwise, they

are free to make their own choices. My advice on this matter is final, and it must be followed under all circumstances.

One more thing! If you have any reasonable suggestions, please inform me. Pay special attention to the children's education and update me in detail about them.

Convey my regards to Sister Hamida and her husband. Lots of love to Shafiq, Sabiha, and Ruqaiya.
Please pass on my greetings to all my friends.

Truly yours,
Your son,
Mohammad Maqbool Bhat

(P.S.) Keep the correspondence ongoing so that I remain informed about your situation. If you face any difficulties, please meet with my friends.

(Mohammad Maqbool Bhat)

————————————————————————————

1. *In Bhat Sahib's absence, his family faced increasing hardships and difficulties. He was deeply aware of this.*
2. *The house was eventually sold in accordance with Bhat Sahib's instructions.*
3. *Pir Abdullah Shah was a Kashmiri migrant residing in Landi Kotal (Peshawar). During his stay in Peshawar, Bhat Sahib borrowed two thousand rupees from him but was unable to repay it. Even during his imprisonment, he remained concerned about settling this debt.*
4. *The two wives of Shaheed Maqbool Bhat.*

Letter 10: Maqbool Bhat to Abdul Aziz Bhat (Uncle)

Central Jail, New Delhi
17th January 1980

Respected Uncle,

Assalamu Alaikum,

I hope this letter finds you in good health. I received your letter dated 6th December and was relieved to hear about the well-being of you and the rest of the family. For that, I am deeply grateful to the Almighty. I constantly pray for your health and safety, and with the strength of your prayers, I remain in good health myself, enduring these days of captivity with patience and gratitude. Please continue to keep me in your prayers. I have complete faith that through them, all our difficulties will be resolved.

You mentioned the claim in your letter. Please continue your efforts regarding this. I am hopeful that you will succeed. However, if you face significant obstacles, there are alternative ways to proceed. Let me know as soon as possible through a letter if any such difficulty arises. Also, consult my brother Master Mohammad Maqbool on this matter. Convey to him my request to take a keen interest in this issue. If you show him my letter, he will surely assist you as per my instructions. It is evident that with my clear guidance, he cannot possibly suggest anything contrary.

I have already written to you in several letters that there is no need to distribute the money from the house. Until a final decision is made regarding my case, the instructions I have given earlier must be followed.

Brother Ghulam Nabi has not yet visited from Kashmir, which has delayed the sending of the power of attorney. There has been heavy snowfall there these days,[1] making travel difficult. Nevertheless, I have written to him, urging him to visit me as soon as possible and to maintain correspondence with you. I expect he will come soon and bring the power of attorney along so it can be sent to you. There is no need for any concern regarding this.

Now, let me write a few words for the children.

Dear Shaukat and Shafiq [2]

How have you been? How are your studies going? You must understand how crucial your matriculation exams are. Think of them as the foundation of a building—if the foundation is weak, the entire structure is compromised. I trust that both of you will dedicate yourselves wholeheartedly to your studies and pass your exams with excellent marks. Keep in mind that securing a good division in matriculation is essential for gaining admission to college with desirable subjects. That is why you must put in your best effort now to achieve a first division. With determination and diligence, nothing is beyond reach. Make sure to write to me and let me know how you are doing.

Sadia and Rafia, my dear daughters [3]

How are you both? How is your schooling progressing? I hope you, too, are studying with dedication and sincerity. I miss you both very much, and my prayers are always with you. A lot of love from my side. My advice to you is to learn good manners and take a keen interest in your education.

Warm regards to Sister Hamida [4] and Aunt [5]. Love to all the children. Please convey my greetings to all my friends.

Your Son,
Mohammad Maqbool Bhat

(P.S. In your next letter, let me know about Javed's exams—whether they have taken place or not. Also, tell Javed to write to me directly so I can inquire about his well-being.)

(Note: Uncle, if you are feeling unwell, please visit Dr. Farooq Haider so you can receive proper treatment.)

————————————————————————————

(1) During this season, the Kashmir Valley experiences heavy snowfall.
(2) Bhat Sahib is addressing his son Shaukat and his cousin Shafiq.
(3) Bhat Sahib is addressing his cousin sisters, Sadia and Rafia. Since they are much younger than him, he refers to them as "daughters."
(4) His eldest cousin sister.
(5) The wife of Uncle Abdul Aziz Bhat.

Letter 11: Maqbool Bhat to Malik Muhammad Asghar

Central Jail, New Delhi
6 March 1980

Brother Malik Muhammad Asghar Sahib,

Assalamu Alaikum,

I have received your first letter, which you likely wrote in early February. Many thanks for remembering me.

In this solitude, these tokens of remembrance from friends like you [1] bring immense joy—something only I can truly understand. Earlier, when my brother [2] visited me, a flood of memories associated with you was rekindled. Learning of your well-being and that of other friends brought me solace, and now, through your letter, those...[3] which can rightfully be called our invaluable heritage.

The anguish and anxiety you have expressed are a reflection of your deep sincerity, love, sacrifice, and loyalty. However, I do not understand why you consider yourself a "criminal," especially when there is no accuser to begin with. [4] That is another matter, for there are certain "crimes" that bring immense pride to people of determination and faith. Surely, among them is not the "crime of weakness," for which the punishment is a sudden death. Rather, it is the "crime" of rebellion—one that ignites faith and conviction within the enslaved, urging even the most insignificant sparrow to dare a contest with the falcon. Such a "crime" does not call for remorse but rather for celebration. The verse you have written does not seem appropriate to my situation, for there is no room for lament here. Seeking praise for victories and sympathy for failures by blaming circumstances cannot be considered the highest and noblest of life's values. However, if I may be forgiven for my audacity, then with utmost humility, I must say:

Hamen khabar hai ke hum hain chiragh-e-akhir-e-shab
Hamaare baad andhera nahin, ujala hai

We know that we are the lamps of the final hour of night
After us, there shall be no darkness, only light.

This applies not just to me but to all of us. Hence, there is no need for regret or sorrow. [5] I firmly believe that the wealth of sincerity, love, determination, and faith that we safeguard shall surely lead our endeavours on the path of truth to ultimate success. There is no need for a lengthy discourse on this subject. It is an eternal truth that has always existed in the annals of human history with all its radiant splendour and shall continue to do so.

There is no dearth of blossoms in this ever-blooming garden of human history—provided that we do not, in our ignorance, become content with merely a few buds.

It brings me joy that you remember me in your prayers. I hope you will continue to extend your heartfelt prayers for me. You mentioned Eid cards, but I never received them. Nevertheless, I thank you once again for remembering me on such joyous occasions. I also extend my gratitude for your message regarding the well-being of my dear ones, Javaid and Shaukat.

Please convey my warm regards, filled with sincerity and love, to all our friends. I hope this exchange of letters shall continue.

Wassalam,
Only Yours,
Your Brother,
Muhammad Maqbool Bhat

(Note): *Please inform me about the condition of Brother Ejaz Malik. I am deeply distressed about the state he is in. Convey my special greetings to him. Also, extend my message of sympathy to his loved ones.*

————————————————————————————

(1) "Tokens" refer to letters sent by friends.
(2) Ghulam Nabi Bhat.
(3) Due to the deterioration of the letter, a few words could not be deciphered.
(4) Malik Asghar Sahib had expressed feelings of shame and remorse for not being able to secure Maqbool Bhat's release.
(5) Malik Asghar Sahib had written a verse by Mustafa Zaidi:

Kuch main hi jaanta hoon jo mujh par guzar gayi
Duniya to lutf legi mere waqiat mein

Only I truly know what I have endured,
The world shall merely delight in my tales

This verse carried a sense of despair and hopelessness, which is why Bhat Sahib spoke of living with hope and resilience.

Letter 12: Maqbool Bhat to Ikramullah Jaswal

Central Jail, New Delhi
2nd May 1980

Asalamualaikum!

Respected Jaswāl Sahib,

After this prolonged separation, I finally received your affectionate letter some time ago. Thank you for remembering me. I must apologise for the delay in responding; for various reasons, I could not write sooner. I hope you will not take this explanation as a mere "excuse for wrongdoing." The significance of correspondence between friends is undeniable, and I regret that I could not maintain this exchange over the years—not because your memory had faded from my mind, but because of the tyranny of circumstances, which, despite one's longing, ruthlessly extinguishes desires. To recount this aspect of prison life, a whole book would be needed, but for now, I shall only say that for captivity—especially the captivity of people like us—the adage "***Prisoners are not supposed to be choosers***" holds the weight of an immutable truth.

You may be surprised to learn that, after years, I have only now been able to use writing material, and even this "right" had to be sought through the High Court. As you rightly said, I am indeed unable to write about my circumstances—not because I lack the ability, but because lamenting one's conditions in writing has never been my way, nor has it ever been my nature.

So, consider this letter as an acknowledgment of receipt of your note, for which you had made a request and which, I am certain, you must have awaited eagerly. If you do not dismiss it as poetic fancy, then allow me to say that your affectionate letter arrived like a refreshing breeze in this confined cage, bringing with it, tidings of joy. A procession of cherished memories began to dance upon the canvas of my mind, and with it, the depth of that unwavering bond of sincerity and love, which we rightfully consider a shared and invaluable legacy, grew ever more vivid.

I hope that despite your "personal" reasons—of which you have written in some detail—you will continue this correspondence, at least for my sake. For me, these letters of affection are no less than a treasure. And for loyal friends like you, the apprehensions of the "*self-proclaimed custodians of authority*", along with all their petty machinations, hold no greater weight than a mere straw.[1]

I read your letter not once but several times—not merely because it was from you, but also in the hope that, through it, I might better perceive the picture concealed between its lines. In the intensity of your pain and emotion, you have said much, and while one may agree with it in light of reason and intellect, those who have embarked upon the path of passion

and madness judge circumstances by entirely different standards. The restlessness of desires, though significant in its own right, cannot be made the axis of life, for those who truly understand love know that *"ʿIshq fī nafsihi"*, that love, in and of itself, is a trial of patience.

Regarding the common affairs of life, an English writer once remarked,

"Nothing succeeds like success, but it is equally true that nothing fails like a failure."

For those who seek to seize the mantle of human leadership by making immediate necessities and the demands of time their guiding principles, this saying may seem no less than a prescription from Machiavelli. Yet, they can never attain the station reserved solely for those entrusted with the task of shaping and adorning human history. Indeed, the reins of history have always rested in the hands of that tribe of lovers who raised the banner of rebellion against the dominant traditions and figures of their time, giving new direction to thought and action. For them, the aforementioned criterion of success and failure has never been *worth consideration*.

Reflect, then—why was *Socrates* made to drink the cup of poison? Why did the Messenger of Time leap into *Nimrod's fire*? Why did *Jesus (ʿĪsā ʿalayhi as-salām)* embrace the cross of the rulers of his era? Why did the *Prophet Muhammad* ﷺ, even after being bloodied in the marketplace of Ṭāif, show no sign of sorrow on his blessed face? Why did *Gautama Buddha* refuse to reconcile with Brahmanic *exploitation*? Were the movements of *Martin Luther's Renaissance*, the theories of *Marx and Engels*, and the spread of anti-colonial independence struggles ever advocates of compromise with the dominant traditions and figures of their respective times?

History has often seen those who laid the foundations of movements that shaped the destinies of nations fail to live long enough to witness their ideas reach full *maturity*, yet this does not diminish their role in constructing the edifice built upon those very ideas. Owing to their historical contributions, they are forever counted among the *"as-sābiqūn al-awwalūn"*, the pioneers and forerunners. This subject is so vast that the constraints of this letter cannot do it justice. In brief, I can only say that *ahl-e-ʿishq*—the people of passion—cannot even conceive of renouncing their identity. To abandon one's identity is not only the death of the lovers and the faithful, but also the death of human progress itself. What should truly frighten us is the day when people abandon the path of sacrifice and selflessness for the sake of ideals, instead becoming slaves to convenience. For in the absence of this virtue, the world would become nothing more than a vast graveyard filled with the walking dead. Seen in this light, your proposal—expressed in the gentlest possible terms—can only be described as [...].[2]

Moreover, you well know that the formation of any national identity is shaped by countless historical factors. It neither comes into existence through mere declarations nor vanishes by being renounced. National identity is a gift of nature; no power on earth can erase it. Thus,

the notion of partition as a consequence of forsaking identity is, to us, nothing short of a grievous sin. [3] Historical truths stand firm upon their own strength; the *frailties* of human beings do not affect them. It is another matter entirely if, due to their own *frailties*, an individual or a group fails to keep pace with the current of history and, like a weightless object, drifts upon its waves, finding solace in the fleeting comforts of the shore. But who knows this better than you—that we cannot belong to such a category?

Who in this world does not long for peace and contentment? But failing to distinguish between the stillness of a graveyard and the tranquillity of a life in motion is sheer folly. That so-called *peace and order* which trembles beneath the shadow of fear and terror, and which requires the slaughter of dreams and the torment of mental disquiet to sustain itself, is in truth nothing but a harbinger of death.

This letter has grown quite lengthy, so I shall conclude this discussion here.

There is no need to worry about me, for whatever Allah has decreed for me shall ultimately be for the best for all of us. You must simply continue your prayers for me. I was saddened to hear of your personal troubles—may Allah ease your difficulties. Being so far away, what else can I do for you besides pray?

The news of the passing of our esteemed companion, the late Muhammad Zaman Khan Abbasi [4], has deeply grieved my heart. May Allah grant the departed soul a place in His mercy and bestow upon his family the strength to bear this loss with patience. Please extend my condolences to the bereaved family on my behalf.

I was troubled to learn of respected Mir Hidayatullah Sahib's heart condition. Nonetheless, it is good that these days he eats less but does not consume grief. Kindly convey my warm regards, full of sincerity and affection, to respected Ansari Sahib, Bashir Tabassum Sahib, Sufi Muhammad Zaman Sahib, respected G. M. Mir Sahib, Muhammad Siddiq Baba Sahib, the doctor, and all our other friends and well-wishers.

In February, I received a letter from the Doctor Sahib [5], which I have already responded to. However, I have yet to receive confirmation of the delivery of my reply, which I had sent to his clinic address. Please also extend my greetings to Naseem Lone Sahib and respected Nazeer Sahib.

I am well aware of Naseem Sahib's intensity of feeling; indeed, I have experienced it myself. His words, *"**Konj bichhad gayi daaran labhdi sajnan noon**" (The crane that strayed from the flock seeks its beloved)*, no doubt reflect his pain. It is, in itself, a sorrowful state of affairs. But tell him from my side that the true tragedy begins when *"**Daar bichhad jaye, raah toon labhdi manzil noon**" (The flock itself strays, searching for the lost path to its destination).* Pray that Allah keeps us safe from such circumstances.[6]

Please do convey my greetings to Hashim and Ashraf. The prolonged wait for Hashim's appeal is a matter of concern—please write to me in more detail about it. Also, through Naseem Lone, kindly send my greetings to respected Dr. Basit. [7]

One last thing—do not think that we are without companions. For those who claim to be people of faith, the entire universe and its Creator remain ever ready to support them. This is not mere philosophical rhetoric but rather the distilled essence of my consciousness and experience. There is little room to expand on this subject here, as both ink and paper are running out. Moreover, if this letter grows too lengthy, the self-appointed custodians of righteousness might dismiss it as devoid of meaning and launch an assault on your pocket as well—something I certainly do not wish to happen.

I am also enclosing a note for respected Mr. Islamabadi along with this letter. I hope you will deliver it to him. It is, in fact, a reply to a long-pending letter of his that I had been unable to write until now.[8]

Yes, the hair on my head may indeed be turning white, but what can I do when my heart remains young, and the desires that dwell within it are still alive and luminous? As for my so-called ascetic demeanour, that is merely a perception born of your imagination—I make no such claim, let alone possess such qualities. Old age and renunciation are reserved for you alone. As for me, I shall no doubt grow old in time, but may our aspirations never age along with our bodies.[9]

Aside from our local friends, kindly convey my regards to your family, and shower your children with all my love.

Only seeking your prayers,
Your brother,
Muhammad Maqbool Bhat

————————————————————————

(1) Under the pretext of censorship, government officials in Pakistan and India would intercept letters written by or addressed to Maqbool Bhat. This would cause delays of several months. Due to such actions, many valuable letters were lost and never reached their intended recipients.
(2) This word was illegible due to ambiguity and could not be read.
(3) A distinct identity and separate recognition are essential for a nation's survival. A nation is divided when its identity is erased. This is why Shaheed Maqbool Bhat emphasized the importance of preserving national identity.
(4) Muhammad Zaman Abbasi of Garhi Dupatta.
(5) Dr. Farooq Haider.
(6) Although it is indeed a tragedy when an individual becomes separated from their group, Shaheed Maqbool Bhat pointed out that the true tragedy is not the

individual's separation but rather when the entire group or nation loses its way on the path to its destination. May God protect the Kashmiri nation from such a tragedy.

(7) Dr. Abdul Basit is a renowned legal expert from Pakistan. He is of Kashmiri descent and currently resides in Lahore.

(8) It is unknown who this Mr. Islamabadi was or what note Bhat Sahib sent to him.

(9) A believer's faith never grows cold. This is why a believer serves as a source of inspiration and action for others.

Letter 13: Maqbool Bhat to Muhammad Arif

Central Jail, New Delhi
8 October 1980

Dear Muhammad Arif Sahib,

Assalamu Alaikum,

I received your letter of condolence. The sincere and heartfelt emotions you expressed regarding the passing of my late wife have been a great source of strength for me in this difficult time, and for that, I am grateful to you.

It is an eternal truth that no living soul can escape death. Thus, for the people of faith, there is no room for grief and sorrow in this matter. However, on a personal level, I do feel sorrow that, in the final stages of her journey through life, I was unable to fulfil the rights and duties that are expected between spouses. The helplessness one feels before the tyranny of circumstances is doubly intensified in such a situation. If this feeling can be called a shock, then I have certainly endured a great one. Perhaps this is why, amidst the desolation of this prison, the love and sympathy expressed by you and many other friends at this moment have helped me to remain steadfast. Thus, I cannot refrain from expressing my gratitude to you.

One cannot deny your view that those who lead a life of purpose must inevitably pass through trials and tribulations. The loftier and nobler the objectives, the greater the intensity of these trials. Even while passing through the stages of the gallows and the noose, people of faith and determination do not let their foreheads crease with worry, for they know that in the struggle between truth and falsehood, in the end, *"Do not weaken and do not grieve, for you will be superior if you are [true] believers."* (Quran 3:139) – this divine promise always manifests in all its splendour. These individuals, despite their apparent destitution and lack of resources, do not fear the abundance of means at the disposal of the enemies of truth. Not because their passion for the journey has made them reckless and thoughtless, but because the nature of their struggle is such that oftentimes *"How many a small group has overcome a large group by the permission of Allah."* (Quran 2:249) – this miracle reveals itself in all its magnificence. The only condition is that their perseverance must not waver. Thus, pray that Allah bestows upon us the blessing of patience and steadfastness so that, in the trials we face, our steps do not falter, and our resolve remains firm.

I was pleased to learn that you are among the friends of my dear Javaid. I can well understand the pain and sorrow he must have felt at his mother's passing in my absence. However, I trust that the companionship and support of friends like you will help him endure this grief. I hope that in this regard; you will not fall short in any way.

Your letter informed me that you are well acquainted with my dear friend and comrade, Mr. Amanullah Khan. This is no less than a great joy for me. I hope that you will convey my sincere greetings to him. Years ago, I received a letter of kindness from him, but for understandable reasons, he could not continue the correspondence. The memories associated with him remain fresh in my mind, and the dust of time has not dimmed their radiance. I would be pleased if you could also inform my friends in Mirpur of my well-being through a letter and convey my greetings to them.

By the grace of the Almighty, my health is perfectly fine, and there is no need for any concern or worry in this regard. I hope that you will continue to remember me through letters in the future.

Wassalam,
Seeking your prayers,
Muhammad Maqbool Bhat

Letter 14: Maqbool Bhat to Javaid Maqbool Bhat (Son)

Central Jail, New Delhi
9 October, 1980

My dear son, Javaid Maqbool Bhat

As-Salaam-u-Alaikum

A few days ago, I got the heart-wrenching message that your noble mother and my wife passed away. (Inna Lillahi Wa Inna Elayhi Raajoun [1]). It is not difficult for me to imagine the agony and shock that you must have gone through and the intensity of pain you must have suffered especially in my absence. But in the testing time we are going through, there's nothing that can be done but to have patience and be thankful. It is my duty to stress upon you to remain patient. I hope in this tragic situation; you will keep patience with firmness and control yourself while dealing with daunting situations with humanly endurance. You must have no place for negativity in your life.

Never forget that Allah puts only those people to tests and trails who possess the ability to succeed in them. But to make use of this ability is the prerogative of humans. I believe that you too will make use of your abilities without bowing down your head and will carry your journey on this road of positivity which you have chosen (for your life) [2]. In'Al'aha MaAs' Saabireen [3]; have a perfect belief in it.

I had received the news of your mother's death some days ago but I was waiting for more details from you. However, yesterday, I came to know from a condolence letter from one of my friends in London that this fateful incident happened when you were in Faisalabad (Pakistan) for your education. The fact that both of us were deprived of her company when she breathed her last doubled my sorrow. I hope that in future you will inform me in detail about her passing away. And more importantly, you will inform me about her last wishes (if you know of any).

I don't have to repeat it that after her death, the responsibility of managing our small family lies with you; a family that I had left behind. To save it (family) from breaking apart and to coalesce it in ties of unity is obligatory on you. I hope that you will make no neglect of any sort in fulfilling this duty. You being the eldest son, I have great expectations from you and I believe that you will leave no stone unturned to fulfill the duty.

Through Ghulam Nabi Bhat (Maqbool's brother who was killed during armed insurgency), I received a letter which you had sent in June in the first week of September. I have dispatched a reply to your letter on Muzaffarabad address. I think if it has been redirected from that address, you must not have been able to get it. Your Faisalabad address was mentioned to me by Hashim Qureshi in his condolence letter, which I received some days

ago. So, I am dispatching this letter to Faisalabad. I will be happy if you inform me in detail about your educational pursuits and also inform me about the difficulties you are facing.

Since a long time, I have not received any letter of well-being from dear Showkat (his nephew). From one of the recent letters, I received from Gulam Nabi, I came to know that Showkat has passed his matriculation and from one more letter from Peshawar, I was informed that he has taken admission in FSc. I will be waiting to hear in detail about it from you.

I would again emphasize on having patience and advise you to be content. Have belief that after passing through every dark night of oppression one finds the dawn of bliss appearing fully showing its splendid luminescence. Therefore, do not give space to sadness and remorse in your heart and do not make mistake in the path to achieve your independence.

I pray that Allah may always keep bestowing you with his mercy and give you happiness.

Say my 'Salaam' to all the friends, nears and dears, rank by rank and love to all the children in the family.

My health as of now is absolutely fine and I am spending my time with patience and thankfulness in times of captivity. There's no need to get anxious and worry for me because whatever has become of my destiny; to be satisfied over it has become a sign of my belief and determination. Keep praying for me.

Khuda Hafiz
Wassalam

Your Father
Mohammad Maqbool Bhat

————————————————————————————

1. *Maqbool Bhat's wife Raja Begum was extremely patient and thankful woman. Incarceration of her husband and his activities had caused problems and shocks to her at every stage of her life but Begum bore it. She passed away on 16th, September, 1980 in Abbottabad where she lays buried.*
2. *Javaid Maqbool Bhat was a student of BSc (Hons) Agriculture in University of Agriculture, Faisalabad.*
3. *Verily, Allah is with the patient ones.*

Letter 15: Maqbool Bhat to Ikramullah Jaswal

Central Jail, New Delhi
15 October 1980

Respected Mr. Jaswal,

Assalamu Alaikum,

I received your letter of condolence. The sincere and affectionate sentiments of sympathy you expressed upon the passing of my late wife have strengthened my resolve. In this difficult time, the patience and endurance you have encouraged me towards are a fulfilment of the duty of friendship, and for that, I am deeply grateful to you.

There is no doubt that everything in the universe is transient, and life and death are ultimately in the hands of Allah. Faith in this eternal truth and a detachment from sorrow and grief have always been the hallmark of those who uphold righteousness. However, in life, the passing of any companion in one's journey inevitably severs bonds, causing an emotional wound and grief to the heart.

This is the general reality of life, but in the particular circumstances I personally face, the depth of this grief is naturally magnified. It is for this reason that the companionship and expressions of solidarity from friends like you have enabled me to endure this loss.

The overall impression conveyed by your affectionate letter, to put it in the mildest of terms, can be described as *desperate*. Desperation is a psychological state that arises in the individual and collective lives of people only in specific circumstances. Due to the constraints of this letter, I cannot elaborate on this further. However, I will say this much: in light of human experience, the persistence of obstacles in the fulfilment of aspirations can naturally lead to such a condition. Given the historical circumstances we, as a people, have faced, the justification of this feeling may be open to debate. Yet, no one can deny that if the objectives are noble and lofty, and, consequently, there exists a clear and practicable blueprint for the construction and adornment of the future, then the process of erasing old imprints and demolishing decayed structures becomes, in itself, an essential component of rebuilding. This sentiment of destruction, by its very nature, is constructive—even if the claimants of *establishment* insist on labelling it as mere devastation. I am certain that you will agree with my attempt to read this positive spirit between the lines of your letter. Desperation, when channeled in this manner, cannot be deemed undesirable. Rather than leading people to dispersal, it unites them and ultimately paves the way for triumph over the forces of tyranny and oppression.

The circumstances you have described can only be seen as the worst manifestation of an economic war. The participants in this battlefield are not only consumed by an insatiable greed for wealth but are also engaged in futile efforts to disguise their nefarious ambitions

of conquest under the thick veils of ideology and values. One can only lament their deluded thinking. Given this situation of slaughter, bloodshed, and, most grievously, the trampling of cherished human principles, you rightly state that the only path to salvation is for the human within humanity to awaken. When and how this will happen? Only time can answer. The role of individuals in this regard is merely to fulfil their respective historical responsibilities—and therein lies their solace and contentment. Pray that Allah grants us the strength and ability to fulfil our historical duty. *Ameen.*

To avoid excessive length, I will conclude this topic here, though I do wish to respond to several other points you raised. As they say, *"So long as we live, there will be meetings yet to come."*

You are correct in assuming that the *"long letter"* you wrote earlier never reached me. However, I have little difficulty in imagining the thoughts and emotions you must have expressed in it.

Over the past few months, I have received three or four letters from our dear brother, Dr Sahib[1], all of which I have duly responded to. However, it seems these messages of well-being are not reaching him, as he even expressed his grievance regarding this matter in his latest letter of condolence. But beyond offering my apologies, what more can I do? Please do convey my sincere greetings to him and all our friends. The pleasant memories associated with you and the rest of our companions are what shield me from the harmful effects of loneliness, which, in these conditions of imprisonment, are not entirely unlikely to arise. I therefore hope you will always remember me in your prayers.

By the grace of the Almighty, my health is perfectly fine, and all other matters remain as they were. There is nothing else particularly noteworthy to mention. Please extend my condolences to the family of the late Muhammad Zaman Abbasi[2] on his passing. I hope you will continue to keep in touch from time to time.

Wassalam
Yours sincerely,
Maqbool Ahmad Bhat

——————————————————————————

(1) Dr. Farooq Haider
(2) Muhammad Zaman Abbasi was a resident of Garhi Dupatta, Muzaffarabad. He has passed away.

Letter 16: Maqbool Bhat to Muhammad Arif

Central Jail, New Delhi
3rd December 1980

My dear Muhammad Arif,

Assalamu Alaikum,

I received your letter dated 24th November a few days ago. Thank you very much for remembering me. Your assumption is correct—your previous letter never reached me. Why? The answer, though understandable, is hardly worth writing down. As someone once said, *"What cannot be cured must be endured."* Given our circumstances, what recourse do we have against those who, in their show of dominance, find satisfaction in erecting barriers even between the most innocent of human connections? Nevertheless, I am reassured to learn of your well-being and that of our mutual friends through you. I hope you will continue to write and keep me informed.

The sincerity and warmth of the emotions you have expressed are, for me, no less than a priceless treasure. The truth is, bonds of the heart, adorned with such sentiments, can never be erased by any force in this world.

Even under the severest constraints on body and soul, such relationships not only compel hearts to beat in unison across distances but also illuminate the hearts of the steadfast with an unyielding light of hope and reassurance, even in the face of the darkest onslaughts of tyranny. Wherever such bonds exist, the barriers and restrictions imposed by men become meaningless. And those who, in their delusion, believe they can sever these ties by subjecting bodies to trials of the gallows and the noose—what can one do but mourn their folly?

Regarding the matters you inquired about—yes, I do have the opportunity to read in prison, and in principle, there is no restriction. However, reading material can only be obtained from the jail library. Over the past years, with a few exceptions, the only books available have belonged to a kind of crime fiction that, in the West, is often dismissed as trash. Since I do not have direct access to the library, the warders bring me whatever English books they come across. I read them—somewhat willingly, somewhat grudgingly—merely to pass the time. I do not know Hindi, and the warders know neither English nor Urdu, so book selection often turns into a classic case of "*Zaban-e-yaar-e-man Turki, wa man Turki nami daanam*."[1]

However, after filing a petition in the Delhi High Court last January, I have at least been granted permission to read an English daily newspaper. Before that, I was deprived of even this small luxury. Correspondence, too, is not officially restricted, but letters must endure long and complicated journeys before reaching their destination—sometimes as arduous as drawing water from stone.

While *MISA*[2] was in effect in India, I was denied all visits. Later, after permission from the Delhi administration, visits resumed. But last year, the High Court abolished this condition, and now I receive visitors like any other prisoner. My younger brother, Ghulam Nabi Bhat, travels from Kashmir two or three times a year to see me. Last February, a dear friend from Britain, who was on a pilgrimage to the sacred sites, also came to visit me.[3]

By the grace of God, my health is perfectly fine, and everything else remains unchanged. With the prayers and goodwill of friends like you, I endure the days of imprisonment with patience and gratitude. As long as your prayers accompany me, I remain hopeful that even in this trial, divine justice shall prevail.

I trust you will convey my well-being and regards to all our mutual friends.

Yours sincerely,
Muhammad Maqbool Bhat

————————————————————————————

(1) "My friend's language is Turkish, but I do not understand Turkish." The Mughals would use this phrase when meeting their Turkic friends.

(2) MISA (Maintenance of Internal Security Act) was an Indian law enacted in 1971, granting the government extensive powers to detain individuals without trial. It was widely used to suppress political dissent, especially during the Emergency (1975–1977).

(3) Malik Ghulam Sarwar Bhat travelled from Britain to meet Bhat Sahib at Tihar Jail on 18th January 1980.

Letter 17: Maqbool Bhat to Arshad Mahmood Ansari

Central Jail, New Delhi
12th December 1980

My dear Arshad Mahmood Ansari,

Assalamu Alaikum,

I received your letter in the last week of the previous month. I apologise for the delay in replying, as circumstances prevented me from responding sooner. However, I was pleased to learn that you are well. May Allah keep your resolve strong and your aspirations unwavering.

It hardly needs repeating that despair has no place in the life of a true believer. To succumb to hopelessness is the mark of utter cowardice. Those who dedicate their lives to ideals and causes cannot be touched by despondency, for their existence becomes one of relentless pursuit and struggle. They are not tormented by the question of whether they will reach their destination; rather, their joy lies in the fact that their caravan continues its journey. To keep this caravan moving forward, they do not shy away even from embracing the gallows.

For the faithful, life and its endeavours hold an entirely different meaning; a meaning more profound and divine than the intrigue of worldly affairs. Thus, adversity and the despondency of despair and regret of those around them doesn't dispirit them. For them, life takes the form of an unceasing process—ever in motion, ever young—through which they contribute to the embellishment of human history. Truly fortunate are those who earn the privilege of being part of this procession of humanity. And where, then, is there any room for sorrow or lament? Pray that, despite our shortcomings and frailties, Allah grants us the strength to take our place in this assembly of the faithful, each according to our capacity.

You mentioned the arrest of our dear comrades, Azeem Dutt, Tahir Naeem Ansari, and Mir Khalid Mahmood, in Azad Kashmir.[1] It is unbefitting of any civilised government to suppress the legitimate political activities of students and young people through imprisonment. Every person who values humanity must protest against such actions. However, I remain hopeful—and indeed certain—that only through such trials, including the ordeal of imprisonment, can our youth truly nurture and serve the ideals and values that we, as a nation, cherish and strive to attain. These trials only serve to spur the momentum of our struggle.

By the grace of the Almighty, my health remains perfectly fine, and I endure the days of imprisonment with patience and gratitude. All other circumstances remain unchanged. It would please me greatly if you could convey my well-being to our mutual friends and extend my heartfelt regards to them.

Once again, my sincere greetings to you and your companions.

Yours sincerely,
Muhammad Maqbool Bhat

————————————————————————————

(1) *These NSF (National Students Federation) activists were organising a convention in Rawalakot. The administration, under Hayat Khan, had imposed restrictions on political activities, leading to their arrest.*

Letter 18: Maqbool Bhat to Muhammad Arif

Central Jail, New Delhi
16 January 1981

My dear Muhammad Arif,

Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullah!

The letter you wrote on 21 December reached me here last week. The reply has been delayed for various reasons, for which I apologise. In the confines of prison life, at times, acquiring even a single aerogram is as arduous as drawing water from stone. I hope you will not be disheartened by this delay.

I do not consider myself deserving of the praise you have expressed. History is filled with such lofty aspirations and steadfastness of faith that shall continue to serve as a beacon for humanity until the end of time. It was this very exalted and supreme virtue that taught *Ishmael* the etiquette of filial duty. It was the same essence of life through which *Jesus* (peace be upon him) willingly embraced the cross, and it was due to this very quality that, despite being bloodied in the marketplace of Taif, the blessed forehead of the *Prophet* (peace be upon him) did not bear a single crease of grief or sorrow. These, indeed, were magnificent and unparalleled figures, but beyond them, history bears witness to countless other examples where men, in pursuit of the purpose of life, stood in defiance of the ruling forces of their time and even offered their lives as a sacrifice. We do not claim to be their equals, yet despite our weaknesses and shortcomings, we can at least strive to follow in their footsteps as much as possible. Pray that Allah grants us the strength to emulate these men of faith and resolve so that we may nurture the very ideals to which we have dedicated our lives. What more could we ask from the Almighty?

As for the question of adversity and the trials and tribulations that arise, it is essential to understand that these are but an intrinsic part of the path chosen by men of faith in every era. The greater the goal and the deeper the devotion to its attainment, the lighter the burden of hardship feels. Those who embrace determination and faith as their guiding principles are certain that: *"How often has a small group overcome a large one."* (Quran) Their devotion itself emerges as the brightest testament to their ultimate triumph. They never despair of divine justice.

It was heartening to learn that you conveyed my well-being and sincere regards to my dear brother Amanullah Khan. The news of his well-being brought peace to my heart. I hope you will continue to extend my greetings and good wishes to him and all other friends. My prayers remain dedicated to them. I trust that they, too, remember me in their supplications. You mentioned your correspondence with our dear Ghulam Nabi—please convey my greetings to him and his companions. May Allah grant them success in their noble endeavours. What else can I do for them from such a distance and in this state except pray?

My knowledge of their situation is limited, yet under the circumstances, there is no need to know more.

By the grace of Allah, my health is perfectly fine, and I am spending these days of captivity with patience and gratitude. Everything else remains as it was. This brief letter cannot accommodate a detailed account of circumstances. For myself, I only ask for your prayers.

With peace,
Yours sincerely,
Muhammad Maqbool Bhat

(Note: A new year has begun—may it bring abundant blessings and prosperity to you and all your loved ones. Ameen, Summa Ameen)

Letter 19: Maqbool Bhat to Arshad Mahmood Ansari

Central Jail, New Delhi
3 February 1981

Dear Arshad Mahmood,

Assalamu Alaikum!

I received your letter in the last week of the previous month. I apologise for the delay in replying. It is not difficult to understand that, despite one's wishes, a person in captivity cannot always fulfil every desire. Therefore, do not mistake my failure to respond in time as deliberate negligence. I also do not wish to cite these constraints as an excuse, for doing so might suggest that I am inviting you to partake in my hardships. As *Ghalib* aptly said, the best way to erase the feeling of pain is to become accustomed to suffering.[1] However, I do not consider it appropriate to express such feelings and sadden my friends. Is it not enough that even in this state of separation and helplessness, we continue to uphold the bonds of loyalty and brotherhood, thus tending to the garden of our hopes[2] which we rightfully consider our shared heritage.

It cannot be denied that a person is inevitably influenced by their surroundings. However, those with lofty goals and grand aspirations strive to shield their thoughts and actions from negative influences, even in the most unfavourable circumstances. They make it their practice to seek the positive aspects of the experiences that life presents. To succumb to adversities, to allow despair and hopelessness to overpower the heart and mind—such weakness is deemed the gravest sin by the faithful and the resolute. Pray that Allah keeps us from becoming among such misguided souls and continues to bless us with the abundant joys of hope and determination. *Ameen, Summa Ameen.*

I was pleased to learn that you conveyed news of my well-being to my friends and companions in Mirpur. Please extend my greetings to them all, particularly to the esteemed *Advocate Abdul Khaliq Ansari*, *Sufi Zaman*, *G.M. Mir*, *Basheer Tabassum*, brother *Sabir Sahib*, and my dear *Ashfaq Ansari*. Kindly send them my heartfelt salutations. My prayers and good wishes shall always remain with them and all our other comrades.

You mentioned the proposed visit of the respected *Amanullah Sahib* to Makkah. If you have met him, do provide news of his well-being in your reply. If possible, also mention briefly what he has been engaged in.

By the grace of Allah, my health is perfectly fine, and these days of confinement are passing with patience and gratitude. Everything else remains as it was. Convey my greetings to all the young companions you mentioned in your letter.

May Allah grant these young men success in their noble endeavours. From such a distance, what else can I offer them but my prayers.

Wassalam,
In need of your prayers,
Muhammad Maqbool Bhat

————————————————————————————

1. *Ghalib's verse:*

   "Ranj se khugar hua insaan to mit jata hai ranj,
   Mushkilein mujh par padi itni ke aasan ho gayin."

   "When a man grows accustomed to sorrow, sorrow ceases to exist;
   So many hardships befell me that they became easy to bear."

2. *The "garden of hopes" refers to a prosperous and independent Kashmir.*

Letter 20: Maqbool Bhat to Malik Ijaz Ahmad

Central Jail, New Delhi
3rd February 1981,

Dear Ijaz Ahmad,

Assalamu Alaikum!

I received your letter—many thanks for remembering me. The memory of that unfortunate incident, which befell us exactly five years ago in Rawalpindi, still lingers in my mind.[1] However, I had assumed that the period of medical treatment you underwent at CMH had been sufficient for the restoration of your mental and physical vitality. It never even crossed my mind that you would endure such a prolonged psychological affliction. I first learned about the severity of your condition and its consequences from a letter sent to me last year by Brother Asghar. Believe me, ever since then, I have remained deeply concerned and have expressed this in several letters to friends. But what can one say of these towering barriers that stand between innocent bonds of correspondence, preventing me from fulfilling my duty of companionship towards you, and equally, from acquiring any updates about your condition? Even Brother Asghar did not write again after that. Under such circumstances, what else could I do but remember you in my prayers? Believe me, those prayers have always been dedicated to you and shall remain so.

It pleases me to know that you have now significantly recovered. Your letter gave me this impression, and I am confident that with continued treatment, a full recovery is not out of the question. You must continue your treatment with patience, calmness, and absolute confidence, leaving no effort undone in the process. This is my advice to both you and those responsible for your care. In today's age, no illness is considered incurable, provided that struggle and effort remain unwavering.

Your letter was like a beautiful bouquet of poetry, entirely suited to the occasion, bringing a touch of spring to the lifeless confines of this prison cell. Who can deny the fact that crucifixion was always the destiny of every Christ, and perhaps it remains so in every era? Yet, despite this, the Gospel of Enlightenment was opened. The terror of the cross could not close its pages, nor will it ever succeed in doing so—why? Because, as a poet once said:

Qatl-gāhoñ se chun kar hamāre 'alam
Aur nikleñge 'ashāq ke qāfile [2]

"From execution grounds, our banners shall be lifted,
And new caravans of lovers shall set forth."

This is not mere poetic fancy but an immutable law of nature, a principle that has adorned human history throughout the ages. It is this very conviction that has enabled the messengers of truth and righteousness to embrace martyrdom at the hands of tyrants with

unwavering resolve—and they shall continue to do so. As for the notion that an honest merchant finds himself amidst a horde of blind buyers, that is but an illusion. Humanity, in its entirety, has never been blind. It is merely that, for a time, the darkness of the night may obscure the value and significance of the mirror of truth. Even in such circumstances, however, there is no cause for grief or sorrow for those who possess determination and faith, for, as you yourself have put it, even in darkness, they can always hear the blossoming of the bud of truth and the chime of the goblet of enlightenment.

By the grace of the Almighty, my health is perfectly fine, and I am spending these days of imprisonment with patience and composure. There is nothing more worth mentioning about myself, for, in your words, *"This is not the time for tales of the night of sorrow."* The journey ahead is still long, and the story of this voyage is best told when it reaches its completion.

Convey my heartfelt greetings and affection to all our friends through you. I hope you will continue to remember me from time to time.

Wassalam
Ever in need of your prayers,
Mohammad Maqbool Bhat

————————————————————————————

1. *This was the first week of January 1976. Malik Ijaz had traveled to Rawalpindi to attend an NLF meeting. He participated in the meeting at night. In the morning, Dr. Farooq Haider took Maqbool Bhat from his house in Chohar towards Saddar Bazaar. Near the Racecourse Ground, they met with an accident. Maqbool Bhat sustained minor injuries, but Malik Ijaz suffered a severe head injury that left him unconscious. He remained in a coma at MH Rawalpindi for several days. Upon regaining consciousness, his mental state was not stable. During his illness, he killed a Mirzai in Kotli. He was arrested and later released on bail. However, he remained afflicted with mental illness for the rest of his life.*
2. *This verse is by Faiz Ahmed Faiz.*

Letter 21: Maqbool Bhat to Ikramullah Jaswal

Central Jail, New Delhi
27 February 1981

Respected Jaswal Sahib,

Assalamu Alaikum!

I have received the letter you posted via book post on 11th February. Prior to this, I also received the letter you had sent to condole the demise of my late wife, and I had responded to it around the same time—I assume it must have reached you by now. I say "assume" because your recent letter makes no mention of its receipt. If you had written any other letter in the meantime, it has likely fallen victim to the hands of the "divine enforcers." If, in this state of captivity, one finds it necessary to erect obstacles in the way of such innocent bonds of correspondence, then what else can one do but lament such perverse minds? Nevertheless, it is enough for me to know that even in this time of forced separation, the wealth of our memories remains untouched, and adversity has failed to dull their freshness. Believe me, every letter from you renews them all the more. So, if I express gratitude for your remembrance, do not mistake it for a mere formality.

"This world is, after all, a living hell."—I cannot agree with this sentiment.[1] In its fundamental composition, this world is merely an assemblage of a few natural elements. It certainly does not lack the resources necessary for human welfare and the adornment of society. Without these resources, mankind could never have imagined reaching for the stars. And yet, it is equally true that there come times in this world when life turns into an ordeal, and humanity is reduced to a horde of wandering corpses. But whose fault is that? When man himself claims divine authority over fates and, disregarding all cherished principles of morality, resolves to imprison his own kind, what else can he expect but servitude and decline? Be it Afghanistan, Kashmir, or any other corner of the world—wherever such conditions prevail, suffering and anguish will be the fate of its people.

Even so, another immutable truth stands firm: for every *thesis*, there arises an *anti-thesis*; for every *climax*, an *anti-climax* follows. Thus, in the language of philosophy, a dialectical process is ever in motion. History bears witness that no era of tyranny and oppression has endured, despite the vast resources at its disposal. The sanctum of existence has, in every age, sought and found its *Abraham*. It is impossible that the *Gospel of Enlightenment* should be prevented from unfurling its pages by the terror of the cross, or that humanity should be deprived of its radiance.

You have inquired about the details and reality of my case. It is impossible to summarise both in a brief letter. In short, my death sentence was upheld by the Kashmir High Court in October 1975, in my absence and without any defense. When, in 1976, I filed a Special Leave Petition in the Supreme Court for appeal, it was dismissed on grounds of being time-barred.

Thereafter, as per procedure, my *Mercy Petition* was forwarded to the state governor. However, its contents proved displeasing to his delicate temperament, and he rejected it. Now, my petition has been under consideration by the President of India since May 1977, with no decision yet rendered.

Incidentally, the Supreme Court here has declared in its rulings that the confirmation and imposition of the death penalty should occur only in *exceptional* circumstances, and that in murder cases, life imprisonment should be the norm. In light of these rulings, the Supreme Court has commuted the sentences of several *condemned prisoners* from death to life imprisonment upon their writ petitions. Such legal proceedings, however, require an enormous sum, which is currently beyond my means. Thus, I spend my days of captivity resting my hopes on the President's sense of justice.

As for dear *Riyaz Ahmad* and *Abdul Hameed*, both are in Srinagar. I hear that, along with me, they are facing a case in a Special Judge's court. Despite being the *Chief Accused*, I have neither been formally informed of the case nor presented before the trial court, even though I remain in government custody. The case is proceeding *in absentia* while I am in state detention. No further comment is necessary.

By the grace of the Almighty, my health is perfectly well, and with the prayers of friends like you, time passes without hardship. I trust that you and the rest of our companions are in good spirits. Last October, I received a letter from my brother, the doctor, but since then, he has remained silent. I do not know whether my reply ever reached him. In any case, through you, I extend my heartfelt greetings to all our friends residing in Rawalpindi and elsewhere.

Only your supplicant in prayers,
Mohammad Maqbool Bhat

(Note) It has been a long time since I last heard of the well-being of Alavi Sahib and G.M. Mir Sahib. If possible, please do inform me of their circumstances.

————————————————————————————

1. *Jaswal Sahib, in his letter, had referred to the world as a "living hell."*

Letter 22: Maqbool Bhat to Malik Ghulam Sarwar

Central Jail, New Delhi
27th February 1981

Peace be upon you.

Dear Brother Ghulam Sarwar Sahib,

I received your letter—thank you for remembering me. After our meeting, I, too, thought several times of reaching out to you, but I did not have your address. *Brother Asghar Sahib* also wrote me a letter from Kotli, but after my reply, he could not continue the correspondence. Thus, this connection could not be maintained. Nevertheless, now that this bond has been established, I hope you will continue to remember me from time to time. After all, where is there any room for feelings of inferiority in correspondence between friends?

There is not the slightest doubt that those who take trust in Allah as their provision and make the banner of truth their motto in the battlefield of life do not waver in their steadfastness, even while enduring arduous trials. Despite a lack of resources and unfavourable circumstances, their resolve remains unwavering, and with the conviction that *"How many a small group has overcome a large one by the permission of Allah" (Qur'an)*, they continue on their chosen path. Then, with this divine assurance that *"Do not weaken and do not grieve, and you will be superior if you are believers" (Qur'an)*, what power in the world can prevent them from success and triumph? Thus, it is incorrect to claim that there is no remedy for the limitations of this world. The only condition is that one does not settle for a few buds alone. The mercy and blessings of Allah are like an endless ocean—if a person remains steadfast in effort and faith, then even the greatest miracles become possible. With this belief, there is no place for despair or hopelessness in our hearts, nor is there any need to be disheartened.

Thank you for the sincerity and affection you have expressed. In truth, the strengthening of these bonds of sincerity and love is our greatest asset. And it is because of this very asset that these moments of trial, despite all their hardships, are becoming easier to endure. The stronger and more enduring these ties are, the fewer the hardships of this journey will become.

So, pray that Allah grants us the strength to fulfill these obligations to the fullest so that we may meet the expectations that we ourselves hold dear. Remember, prayers that arise from the depths of the heart are surely answered in the divine court. After all, who else can better know the state of hearts than the Almighty Himself?

The sentiments you have expressed regarding the *passing of my late wife* have strengthened my courage. *"Every soul shall taste death" (Qur'an).* Man is mortal, and none can escape

death. However, in this matter, my sorrow lies in the fact that in the final stages of her journey, I could not fulfill the responsibilities toward her that were mine to bear. This was Allah's will—who could have done anything against it?

My health is perfectly fine, and I am spending these days of captivity with patience and gratitude. The rest of the circumstances remain unchanged. To you, and through you to all other friends and well-wishers, I extend my heartfelt greetings of sincerity and love.

Only seeking your prayers,
Muhammad Maqbool Bhat

Letter 23: Maqbool Bhat to Arshad Mahmood Ansari

Central Jail, New Delhi
29th March 1981

Dear Arshad Mahmood Ansari Sahib,

Assalamu Alaikum!

I received your letter dated 17th March. Praise be to Allah that you are well. I have responded to all your letters regularly until now. Last time, due to unavoidable circumstances, I was delayed in writing a reply, for which I had also apologised. My effort is always to respond promptly to the letters of all friends, as any delay on my part could understandably cause concern among my circle of acquaintances. I believe that in this forced separation, this brief exchange of letters is not only the sole means of keeping our memories alive but also strengthens our feelings of closeness, expresses sincerity and affection, and thus fortifies our hopes and determination. Rest assured, there will be no negligence from my side in this regard.

Your concern is justified. However, I want to assure you that life and death are solely in the hands of the Almighty, who is not only our Creator but the Creator of the entire universe. This is not merely a belief but, for me, a truth derived from both knowledge and experience. Those who stand for righteousness in the struggle between truth and falsehood hold a unique and distinct perspective on life. It is not possible to fully articulate this perspective in the confines of this brief letter, but I will say this much: the game for which we have staked our lives is of such a nature that even in defeat, one does not truly lose. What truly matters is that a person, with complete awareness, continues to nurture the purposes of life. If the elements of awareness and purpose are removed from life, then such an existence is tantamount to death. The death of consciousness and action is, in reality, the true death. Pray that Allah keeps us all safe from this fate.

By the time this letter reaches you, even if only for a short while, you will have relished the fresh breezes of your homeland.[1] Those very breezes, whose longing and yearning intensify in exile, growing ever stronger in the agony of separation.[2] Nevertheless, I can only envy your good fortune. There is no remedy for the intensity of this pain, but I do seek your heartfelt prayers to keep hope alive. During your stay in the homeland, you must have had the opportunity to meet our friends in person and learn about their well-being. It would bring me great joy if you could inform me about the condition of these companions from whom I have been separated for years. Please convey my greetings and prayers to all of them. I am certain that by providing me with these details, you will once again grant me the opportunity to express my gratitude.

By the grace of the Almighty, my health is absolutely fine. Everything else remains unchanged. I continue to spend these days of imprisonment with patience and gratitude. If you have received any news of well-being from the respected Amanullah Sahib, please do inform me.

Please convey my sincere greetings to you and all your friends.

Only seeking your prayers,
Mohammad Maqbool Bhat

————————————————————————————

1. *The recipient of the letter had travelled from Saudi Arabia to his home in Mirpur. He likely received this letter upon his return to Saudi Arabia.*
2. *Those who struggle for the honour and freedom of their homeland experience great anguish in being away from it. One can only imagine the state of this passionate devotee of Kashmir's liberation in exile.*

Letter 24: Maqbool Bhat to Dr. Farooq Haider

Central Jail, New Delhi
30th April 1981[1]

Brother Farooq Haider Sahib,

Assalamu Alaikum,

A while ago, I received the parcel of clothes you had sent.[2] A few days later, I also received your affectionate letter. I am grateful to you for both.

It is enough for me that, despite this long separation, you still hold my memories close to your heart. And the truth is that, with the support of these memories, these days of imprisonment—despite the hardships of solitude—are becoming easier to endure. Your complaint is valid that I have not written to you for a long time. It is not that your memory has faded from my mind, nor that I have nothing to write. Even in this period of imprisonment, I encounter numerous experiences that are certainly worth mentioning.[3] However, most of these experiences tend to be bitter. And you have no idea that, in this prison, being classified as a *Top Security Prisoner*, the bitterness of my experiences is even greater. That said, after enduring such trying conditions for so long, I have now grown accustomed to them, to the point that I barely feel their sting anymore. Smiling in the face of hardships has become my second nature. Yet, I do not wish to add to the pain of sensitive friends like you by recounting such experiences. My disposition now aligns with the words of a film poet: "*We alone shall suffer the punishment for our crime of love.*" As for the transgressions of others, complaining is of no use.

Nevertheless, I admit that I have been negligent in informing you of my well-being, and for that, I apologise. However, I must mention that I have always responded to each letter of yours that I have received. For me, there has never been any reason to delay replying once a letter arrives. Therefore, if you continue this exchange of letters, there is no reason why you should not continue receiving news of my welfare. In this matter, you are in a better position than I am.

It pleased me to learn that you had travelled to Peshawar and met my family members there. Due to my respected uncle's old age, I often remain worried about him, especially since his health is not good. In this regard, all I can do is pray. I hope you will make every effort to uplift his spirits so that I may feel somewhat relieved about this concern. I trust that your advice will help alleviate the helplessness he feels in my absence. Over the past two months, I have not received any letter from him, so I do not know to what extent he has been able to resolve his immediate issues. Please encourage him to keep me informed about his circumstances at regular intervals.

By the grace of God, my health is perfectly fine, and I continue to endure the days of imprisonment with patience and gratitude. Everything else remains the same. Your letter provided news of the well-being of our friends, for which I am grateful. Please not only inform them of my well-being but also convey my heartfelt greetings to them. In recent days, I also sent a letter to the esteemed *Jaswal Sahib*, which he has likely received by now.

Extend my special greetings to you and your family. Lots of love to little *Sultan Haider*. In your next letter, do write about the education of *Izzah* and *Manzah.*

Wassalam,
Your brother,
Mohammad Maqbool Bhat

————————————————————————————

1. *Maqbool Bhat Shaheed forgot to write the date on this letter. However, the postal stamp on the aerogramme in Rawalpindi clearly reads 30-APR-81.*
2. *Dr. Farooq Haider had sent stitched clothes to Maqbool Bhat Shaheed.*
3. *Even in the worst solitary confinement, Maqbool Bhat Shaheed's observation of life remained remarkably clear.*

.

Letter 25: Maqbool Bhat to Malik Ghulam Sarwar

Central Jail, New Delhi
31st May 1981

Respected Sarwar Sahib,

Assalamu-u-Alaikum,

After a long time, I received your affectionate letter. Countless thanks to Allah Almighty that you are well. There is no doubt that life in a foreign land follows such routines that one is constantly engulfed by a lack of time. However, given the circumstances we face, this brief and uncertain exchange of letters holds great significance. Not only does it keep the lamps of our memories alight, but in this period of trial, it also strengthens our resolve. Therefore, while expressing my gratitude for your remembrance, I hope that despite your busy schedule, you will continue this correspondence in the future.

I agree with your view that to achieve success and triumph in life, one must pass through thorny paths and rugged mountains. Those who, citing the unfavourability of circumstances and the hardships of the journey, hesitate to give practical shape to their cherished ideals—deliberately allowing themselves to drift with the current—are, in truth, committing a great injustice to their own lives. To abandon the path of struggle and action merely due to adverse circumstances, despite possessing intellect and awareness, is a sin for which there is no atonement. Pray that Allah Almighty keeps our lives free from the taint of this sin and grants us the strength to remain steadfast on the path of faith and action to the best of our ability.

"Rabbana wa la tuḥammilnā mā lā ṭāqata lanā bih. Wa'fu 'annā, waghfir lanā, warḥamnā. Anta mawlānā fanṣurnā 'ala al-qawm il-kāfirīn."

"O our Lord, do not burden us with what we cannot bear. Pardon us, forgive us, and have mercy upon us. You are our Protector, so grant us victory over the disbelieving people."
(Ameen)

The bank draft of 30 pounds that you sent along with your letter has been received. It has not yet been cashed, as it was handed over to the jail authorities for processing. And you are well aware of the remarkable efficiency with which government machinery operates in this part of the world, aren't you?[1] Your letter actually arrived about a month and a half ago, but for certain reasons, I was delayed in replying, for which I apologise.

My health is perfectly fine, and I am enduring my days in captivity with patience and gratitude. About a month ago, I was transferred from Ward No. 18 to Ward No. 16, which in jail terminology is referred to as the "execution block." Previously, I was in complete isolation; now, I have the opportunity to interact with some death-row prisoners. Other

conditions remain unchanged. These days, the heat is at its peak, and being confined to the cell 24 hours a day makes my body feel like a fish out of water. The rest is well.

Do not forget to convey my greetings to all our friends. Recently, Brother Asghar Sahib also sent a letter from Kotli, which I intend to reply to soon.

Wassalam.
Khuda Hafiz.

Your well-wisher,
Muhammad Maqbool Bhat

————————————————————————————

1. *Whenever a friend sent money to Maqbool Bhat Shaheed, the jail authorities would deliberately delay cashing the bank draft for months.*

Letter 26: Maqbool Bhat to Raja Muzaffar Khan

Central Jail, New Delhi
5th June 1981

Dear Muzaffar Raja,

Assalamu Alaikum!

After a long time, I have received news of your well-being. However, this does not mean that I had forgotten you or that our bond had weakened. In this state of solitude and forced separation, memories of sincere and loyal friends like you continue to strengthen my resolve. I am certain that the ties of sincerity and love that have bound us together for years—nurtured with the essence of our hearts—are so deep and everlasting that neither the adversity of circumstances nor the raging storms of opposition can ever weaken them. However, your affectionate letter has refreshed those memories that, even in captivity, I hold close to my heart. So, if I express my gratitude in this regard, please do not consider it merely a formality.

You mentioned your constraint in writing more despite your desire to do so[1], and I fully understand it[2]. However, I would like to tell you that to understand the language of the heart, there is no need to beat drums. Emotions and feelings have a unique expression of their own. Understanding them does not require lengthy writings. Without saying much, you have conveyed a great deal, and in response, I pray that Allah grants you an ever-increasing zeal for certainty and determination for action. *Ameen.*

Since you have the honour of being near the *Baytullah* (House of Allah), I trust that you will continue to be enriched with the blessings of conviction and enthusiasm for action. After all, this is the very place from which, centuries ago, humanity was granted the eternal message of spiritual and physical liberation. The revolutionary inspiration of this message continues to benefit all sincere souls. To stand against the forces of ignorance, darkness, oppression, and slavery and to uphold the glorious traditions of faith and action is the very essence of the great example bequeathed to us by the Prophet Muhammad (*peace be upon him*) and his close companions[3]. I am certain that the prayers and commitment of dear friends like you will prove to be a source of strength and success for us in this trial of the noose and the gallows.

The realisation of one's shortcomings is, in itself, proof of one's wisdom and greatness. There is no need to be ashamed of it. If one lacks this awareness, then true determination for struggle and action becomes impossible. As the saying goes, *"God's house may have delay, but not darkness."* If one's faith and commitment remain steadfast, then despite thousands of failures and setbacks, the joy of achieving one's goal eventually becomes one's destiny. And as a poet has said:

"Yeh baazi ishq ki baazi hai jo chaho laga do dar kaisa
Gar jeet gaye to kya kehna, gar haare bhi to baazi maat nahi"

This game is the game of love, wager whatever you desire, why fear?
If you win, what a triumph! If you lose, even then, the game is not lost.[4]

On top of that, the Qur'an gives us this glad tiding:

"Do not lose heart and do not grieve, for you shall be victorious if you are true believers."

So, pray that Allah grants us the honour of being among the believers so that we may be counted among the recipients of this promise. May the deniers of truth be humbled, and the people of righteousness be blessed with success and triumph.

By the grace of Allah, my health is perfectly fine, and I am spending these days of captivity with patience and gratitude. The conditions of imprisonment remain unchanged, except that a month ago, I was transferred from Ward No. 18 to Ward No. 16 of the prison. In jail terminology, this ward is called the *Phansi Kothi* (*Hanging Barrack*). After years of isolation, I now have the opportunity to interact with a few other prisoners in this new ward. I am sure you would like to know more about my captivity. However, it is impossible to detail everything in this brief aerogram. Moreover, the distress of imprisonment now seems like a natural state, and as Ghalib said:

"Ranj se khoogar ho insaan to mit jata hai ranj"

"When a man becomes accustomed to suffering, suffering ceases to exist."

Please convey my heartfelt greetings to all our friends and loved ones. I hope you will continue to remember me from time to time so that our mutual memories remain fresh.

Khuda Hafiz
Yours sincerely,
Muhammad Maqbool Bhat

————————————————————————————

1. *According to Raja Muzaffar Khan:*

   "My constraint was of two kinds. Firstly, while writing to Bhat Sahib, I would become so overwhelmed with emotion that words would fail me. Secondly, I had sent my letter from Rome through an Indian colleague in my company (who was the son of a senior Congress-I leader) to be delivered to Bhat Sahib in Tihar Jail. The caution I exercised in writing the letter was my compulsion, and Bhat Sahib understood it well."

2. *This shows the depth of Maqbool Bhat's empathy! Despite being confined in a foreign prison, he was so considerate of the constraints faced by his friends who lived in free lands*

3. *The source of Maqbool Bhat's ideology was the very place from where the great call for human dignity arose, offering the true concept of freedom and liberty of thought.*
4. *This verse is by Faiz Ahmed Faiz.*

.

Letter 27: Maqbool Bhat to Ikramullah Jaswal

Central Jail, New Delhi
17th June 1981

Respected and Honourable Jaswāl Sahib,

Assalamu Alaikum!

The letter of affection you entrusted to the post on the 17th of last month reached me some time ago. However, for certain reasons, I was delayed in responding, for which I seek your pardon. The concern you and other friends feel due to the delay in receiving news of my well-being is not only understandable but also a significant sign of the bond of sincerity and love that has existed between us for years—nurtured by all of us with the lifeblood of our hearts. Believe me, at times, the delay on my part is not intentional but rather a result of the constraints of imprisonment. I always strive to respond to the letters of friends, and I have never been negligent in this regard. However, it so happens that some of my replies disappear along the way, disrupting this innocent exchange of letters. In the present circumstances, what else can be done except to endure? *"What cannot be cured must be endured."* When there is no remedy for an ailment, what alternative remains but to endure it with patience? Nevertheless, rest assured that the memories associated with you remain as fresh in my mind and heart as ever, despite the long adversities of time, and their freshness continues to be the greatest source of strength for my patience and perseverance.

The heartfelt emotions of sincerity and love you have expressed towards me are a priceless treasure. In public life, no honour or pride is greater for a person than the unwavering bond with their companions—established not by self-interest or the necessities of time but upon the grand human values of conscious harmony, sincerity, loyalty, love, and sacrifice. The spontaneous prayers emerging from the depths of the hearts of friends like you are not only living symbols of this selfless affection, which we can rightfully take pride in, but they are also sufficient to invoke divine mercy for our success in this time of trial and tribulation. Rest assured, where determination is youthful, courage is high, and the spirit of action is present, the prayers on one's lips reflect the aspirations and desires that have always adorned and propelled human efforts. So, continue this chain of prayers so that divine mercy may be stirred and this difficult time may soon pass. *Ameen.*

By the grace of Allah, my health is perfectly fine. The conditions of imprisonment remain unchanged, and thus, I continue to pass my time with patience and gratitude. Some time ago, I was transferred from Ward No. 18 to Ward No. 16, which is referred to in prison parlance as the *"Hanging Barrack."* The difference is that where there was once solitude, I now have the opportunity to meet some fellow prisoners, making time pass with a little more *"engagement."* Do not forget to mention '*Ward No. 16*' in your next letter.

My sincere greetings to you and, through you, to all friends. I hope you will keep me informed of your well-being from time to time.

Wassalam,
Seeking your prayers,
Mohammad Maqbool Bhat

Letter 28: Maqbool Bhat to Muhammad Arif

Central Jail, New Delhi
20th June 1981

Dear Muhammad Arif Sahib,

Assalamu Alaikum,

I received your letter dated 2nd June. It felt as though a lightning bolt had struck the heart. The passing of the late Sufi Muhammad Zaman Sahib—whom my heart hesitates to refer to as "late"—is a loss that no amount of tears can justly mourn. [1] The image of this great embodiment of sincerity and loyalty appears before my eyes as though he were speaking to me this very moment.

In this transient world, no living soul can escape death. What choice do we have but to bow our heads in submission before this eternal law of nature? He may have left this world, but the memories tied to him are such that they cannot be forgotten for as long as I live. His passing is a personal tragedy for me. Only I might fully grasp the depth of love he had for me, and the profound sincerity and loyalty he harboured toward me. What grieves me even more is that, in this state of forced separation, I was deprived of fulfilling the duty of companionship in the final moments of Sufi Sahib's life. As a poet has said:

"Ek charaagh aur bujha aur baṛhī tārīkī..."[2]
"Another lamp was extinguished, and the darkness deepened..."

Even amidst the sorrow and melancholy that naturally arises in our ranks from the passing of this brave soul, we must not fall into despair and hopelessness. For the late Sufi Sahib belonged to that group of humans whose every aspect of life and every action is driven by principles and ideals. These are people who do not live merely for the sake of existence, but who dedicate their lives to the fulfilment of those ideas and aspirations which they rightfully regard as humanity's most cherished legacy. It is the struggle and effort of such truth-aware men that acquaint humanity with the true meaning of life and keeps alive the process of reform and salvation. This process not only allows individuals to realise their noble ambitions but also adorns life with the values of beauty and goodness, furnishing peace to both heart and soul.

About people of such calibre, the Divine Word says:

"You are the best nation raised for mankind: you enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong." (Qur'an)

Indeed, those who dedicate their lives to *amr bil ma'rūf wa nahi 'anil munkar*—enjoining good and forbidding evil—what example could be more worthy of emulation than theirs? Pray that Allah, the Exalted, grants us the strength to tread this path, so that the light of

righteous struggle kindled by the blood and spirit of people like the late Sufi Sahib and his kind never be extinguished. Ameen. What greater desire could we possibly have?

I would be grateful if you could convey my sentiments of condolence and sympathy to the bereaved family and all those associated with him regarding this sorrowful death. My prayer is that may Allah grant the departed a place in *Jannat al-Firdaus*, beside His chosen ones, and may He bestow upon the bereaved family the patience and strength to bear this heart-wrenching loss.

As for the recommendation you mentioned, made by the *Srinagar administration to the President of India* concerning my case, [3] I am not at all surprised. The reality is that the group which the accidents of time have placed upon the throne of power there—there's no point expecting goodness or welfare from them. This is not merely a momentary reaction, but a *considered opinion* of mine. This opinion is based on the impartial analysis I have been carrying out for several years. However, it is not possible to explain its details within this brief aerogram. Who can explain to such short-sighted people that:

"Shahādat hai manzil o maqsūd-e-mu'min,na māl-e-ghanīmat na kishwar kusha'ī."
"Martyrdom is the believer's goal and destination—not war booty nor conquest."

Where wealth and conquest become the only goals, hoping for justice is not just wishful thinking—it is a sign of complete misunderstanding. Fortunately, I am suffering from neither.

Regardless of who recommends what, or who issues which verdict, my only desire is that Allah grants me strength to remain firm in faith, and that my steps do not falter during this trial and tribulation. I am confident that if Allah's mercy continues to flow, even the fire of Nimrod will become a garden—and if He has destined martyrdom for me, then I shall embrace the cup of death upon the scaffold with a fearless smile. [4] There is no room for anxiety or panic in this matter. Simply pray that the Almighty grants me firmness of heart.

Please convey my sincere greetings to all friends—especially to Janab Amanullah Khan.

Khuda Hafiz.
Wassalam.
Your well-wisher,
Muhammad Maqbool Bhat

Note: A while ago, I was transferred to *Ward No. 16*, which is referred to in prison parlance as the "*hanging barrack*." Previously, I was in isolation, but now I have the opportunity to sit and speak with fellow inmates. When writing the next letter, please don't forget to mention *Ward No. 16* in the address.

————————————————————————————

1. *Sufi Muhammad Zaman passed away on 25th May 1981. He was a resident of Mirpur and was counted among the most sincere and selfless workers of the Plebiscite Front.*
2. *Original verse: "Ek diya aur bujha aur baṛhī tārīkī."*
   “Another lamp was extinguished, and the darkness deepened.”
3. *The Srinagar administration had written to the President of India, recommending that Maqbool Bhat not be released, but rather be hanged.*
4. *Maqbool Bhat Shaheed fulfilled this very vow. When he was taken to the gallows, he walked fearlessly with a calm face and kissed the noose like a man of unwavering courage.*

Letter 29: Maqbool Bhat to Mian Ghulam Sarwar

Tihar Jail, New Delhi
7th August, 1981

Salam,

I received your letter of 27th July a few days ago. Believe me, that epistle of love and the attached newspaper clippings have doubled the joy of Eid for me. Not only because of the sincere affection that you have expressed for me, which I shall always treasure, but because in my long incarceration this is the first letter that I have received from my homeland upon which malign fate has foisted the oppression and occupation of India….

I have to say that into this desolate dungeon; your letter has brought me a hopeful message of life…. You cannot possibly imagine what a man who has been cut off by force of circumstance from his countrymen, goes through. The pain and anguish that this isolation nourishes becomes all the more intense when one thinks of all those who have dreamt of a free homeland and dedicated their lives to the realisation of that dream.

Jean Paul Sartre has thus described the (deterioration of the) relationship between tormentors and the tormented:
'The end of communication is the beginning of all violence; where communication stops, beating, burning and hanging takes place'.

For the fulfillment of my desire for my land and my people, I have gone through 'the beating and the burning' at the hands of those that deny truth. Having failed to break my spirit, only 'hanging' is left for them to try.

May the Almighty strengthen my resolve and fortitude and bestow upon me the patience that I may not waver in this final test.

I accept your affection and sincerity, but I certainly do not deserve the praise that you shower upon me. To stand up to and defy the standard bearers of tyranny is the greatest honour of humanity. The history of ripping off from tyrants their democratic robes' and exposing their monstrosity is as old as the history of man. This glorious chapter of our history has been luminescent for centuries. We have never had, nor shall ever have, a dearth of heroes, who as moths embrace the flame, are ever ready to lay down their lives for liberty. It is a different matter that on several occasions during our struggle, we have faced a situation of '***Yeh Nadaan Gir Gayey Sajdoon Mein Jab Waqt-e-Qayaam Aaya***' *(when the test came the fools started praying instead of standing up)* because of a compromising attitude of some of our comrades or again because of the machinations of some opportunists. But such temporary phases are common in the history of nations. They can never achieve permanence.

Nations survive because of that (strong) spirit, that abiding passion for liberty, which according to our Holy Prophet (pbuh), *"emboldens one to recite the Kalima-e-Tawheed (the call for truth) before a tyrant, and that too with the conviction that this is the greatest Jihad".*

I have never considered myself apart from this struggle for freedom that our people have embarked upon. In spite of my weaknesses and infirmities, I have tried my best to discharge my responsibilities. In this never-ending conflict between truth and falsehood, those who respond to their conscience and identify themselves with the standard bearers of truth, covet no rewards and desire no praise. This long and trying struggle sees many crests and troughs. The passage of time and unfavorable circumstance may affect its intensity but cannot put an end to it. It is the greatest duty of every upholder of truth to continue this struggle in all its intensity. Negligence can only lead to a state where not only does humanity lose the purpose and meaning of our existence but slows down that current of noble deeds that has sustained prophets and those that revolutionised human life. We cannot claim to belong to that category of benefactors of humanity, but in spite of our vulnerability we can benefit by following their example. As long as the gloomy night of oppression hovers over us, we have to go on illuminating the scaffolds and gallows with our heads.

I am convinced that only those who struggle with a firmness of faith, enjoining truth and patience can deliver humanity from a fearful disaster. Pray that the Almighty Allah include us amongst righteous. It is possible that you (may well) be bored with what I have written in a spate of emotions, but you can understand that except for my ideas and feelings, I have nothing that I can bequeath to those who remember me.

You have mentioned your efforts to get my 'sentence' reduced; I express my gratitude to you. You have based your efforts on the premise that the 'crimes' that I have been accused of are a result of my political convictions. What were these crimes? How were they investigated? How was the case against me framed? And in the process, how were law and justice torn to shreds? Who played what role in this farce? What manipulations took place to get me liquidated? All this shall remain a mystery for now! A whole book is required to narrate the full (story); a letter is all too brief for the task. I am certain that the time shall soon come, when I shall recount the facts of this so-called case (against me) in people's court. If the local administration feels that the requirements of law and justice have been met, why are the proceedings not being made public?

The press clippings attached with your letter have made me aware of the public outcry evoked by the proposed decision to carry execute the 'sentence' against me. Please convey my gratitude to all leaders, eminent citizens, organisations and institutions that have played a principal role in this.

By the grace of God, I am in perfect health. I spend my time with forbearance in this 'death cell', where I was shifted to in the last week of May this year. Since then, I have not been back to the security ward where I was incarcerated for the past five years, I feel that the

government has not reviewed the decision to carry out the sentence. So, things are as they were. Let us see which way the wind blows.

To you, and through you, to all my countrymen, my regards.

Soliciting your prayers,
Mohammad Maqbool Bhat

Letter 30: Maqbool Bhat to Malik Ghulam Sarwar

Central Jail, New Delhi
15th August, 1981

Respected Ghulam Sarwar Sahib,

Assalamu Alaikum,

I hope that you and the rest of our friends and companions are all well. Your letter dated 23rd June, along with the kind note from my brother Aman Sahib dated 29th June, both reached me together on the blessed occasion of Eid al-Fitr. Thank you very much for remembering me. I pray that Allah Almighty grants prosperity to your business and blesses you with ever-increasing ability and strength in your efforts to achieve the goals for which you are striving in a foreign land.

The advice you've given regarding pursuing legal action in the Supreme Court against my "sentence" could take the form of filing a writ petition in this matter. I cannot say with certainty what the outcome will be, but I believe the effort is *worth trying*. My younger brother came to meet me in mid-July. We discussed this matter as well. I had advised him to initiate preliminary action by consulting a few of his lawyer friends in Srinagar. But what can I tell you? Even my signed *Vakalatnama*[1] hasn't yet managed to reach them.

Let me come directly to the point. I am grateful to you for your offer to bear the expenses of filing the writ in the Supreme Court. You're surely aware that in this part of the world, everything except man has reached the peaks of inflation. I estimate that the legal proceedings we are contemplating will cost somewhere between 15 and 20 thousand rupees. No senior lawyer at the Supreme Court here charges less than 3,000 rupees per hearing. Then there are additional costs for paperwork and assistants.

Another point to consider is that even if the Supreme Court or the President of India decides to reduce my present "sentence", the case being tried *behind my back* for years in Srinagar will also need to be challenged in the High Court. That too will certainly incur a substantial cost. For this next stage of legal battle—which I have alluded to—competent lawyers will be required.

So, if possible, please arrange at least 20,000 rupees for now, and either send it in the name of my brother Ghulam Nabi, or, if that is not feasible for some reason, then send it directly to me at the jail address either via bank draft or through whatever method you find suitable. Once I receive your response, further steps can be taken in this regard. If you think any other procedure would be better, do inform me—since my contact with the outside world is, at best, minimal.

Brother Aman Sahib mentioned a lengthy letter he had written last December. I have not received it till now, and nor do I expect it to arrive anymore.

Please convey my condolences to the family and survivors of Nambardar Sahib on his passing. May Allah Almighty grant the departed soul a place in His Mercy, and bless the bereaved with the strength of patience and gratitude. Kindly offer my greetings to respected mother, and also to Parveen Bhabi. For the little girl, please convey all my love.

My health is completely fine. I am still lodged in Ward No. 16. The dominant assumption is that, in light of the outcry raised against the proposed execution of my "sentence", the matter has been put on hold for now. What lies ahead is for Allah to decide. I have mentally prepared myself for every kind of *situation*, and I seek your prayers that in these final stages of trial, Allah Most High may keep me firm in patience and perseverance—and that no slip or lapse may occur on my part in this journey.

Wassalam,
In need of your prayers,
Muhammad Maqbool Bhat

————————————————————————————

1. *Vakalatnama: A legal document authorising a lawyer to act on someone's behalf in court.*

Letter 31: Maqbool Bhat to Raja Muzaffar Khan

Central Jail, New Delhi
15 August 1981

Dearest Muzaffar Raja,

Peace and blessings upon you.

Your affectionate letter dated 27 July reached me just a few days ago, arriving with the blessed moments of *Eid-ul-Fitr.* Thank you for remembering me.

Your worry and concern for me are valid, but you must never lose sight of the fact that the destination towards which this small caravan of ours, journey demands the highest traditions of sacrifice and selflessness. In this struggle between truth and falsehood, wherein we have knowingly and deliberately aligned ourselves, offering one's life is no great matter. The madness of *Majnun* is just as vital to the beloved Freedom as the circulation of blood is to survival. To cool the embers of cruelty and tyranny that consume humanity, one must always be willing to leap fearlessly into the fire of *Nimrod*—and always shall be. How can the pages of the *Gospel of Awareness* be opened without kissing the Cross?

Those who, despite being conscious of truth and the dignity of humanity, falter in the face of hardship and trial on the path of truth, those whose feet waver in the field of action—indeed, they disgrace the very love and passion they claim to possess. Such people have been described in the Divine Book as *maghdūb ʿalayhim waḍ-ḍāllīn* (those who have earned wrath and those who have gone astray). Let us pray that none among us is ever counted among such souls. Ameen.

For those who profess truth and devotion to God, the best life is one spent gaining awareness of truth and using that awareness to adorn and elevate individual and collective life. And the finest death is that which occurs in the battle to free humanity from oppression and ignorance. Do you not know that it is far nobler to lay down one's life on the gallows in battle against deniers of truth than to die in agony on a deathbed?

Wherever this perspective of thought prevails, there is neither desire for reward nor craving for praise. For me, it is no small matter that the boundless sincerity and eternal love of you and friends like you remain with me even in this age of utter selfishness. With such a distinction in my favour, what more could I possibly wish for.

You mentioned the matter of my postage expenses. I don't find it appropriate to burden you in this regard, so please don't trouble yourself. However, since you invoked God's name in asking, [1] it becomes necessary for me to explain the procedure. You may, whenever and however you wish, send money to me at the jail address via bank draft or money order through the Jail Superintendent. The draft should be issued by a bank that either has a branch in Delhi or maintains commercial dealings with another bank based here.

By God's grace, my health remains perfectly fine, and as of writing, I am still confined to Ward No. 16. It seems that, in response to the public outcry raised across the nation against the proposed execution of my sentence, the "rulers of the time" have deemed it expedient to put the matter on hold for now. Let's see which way the wind turns next. Please pray that, in these final stages of trial, Allah grants me the strength of patience and steadfastness, and blesses me with enough fortitude that I may not falter even slightly in my resolve.

Wassalam
Ever indebted to your sincerity and affection,
Muhammad Maqbool Bhat

————————————————————————————

1. *Raja Muzaffar Khan had invoked God's name while asking Maqbool Bhat how to send money to him. That is why Bhat Sahib has explained the procedure in this letter.*

Letter 32: Maqbool Bhat to Rasheed Zafar

Central Jail, New Delhi
15 August 1981

Respected Rasheed Zafar Sahib,

Peace be upon you.

Thank you ever so much for remembering me with such sincerity and affection, setting aside the formalities of acquaintance. Your letter, brimming with noble sentiments and reverence, became a source of strength and courage for me in the bleak desolation of this prison. The bouquet of loyalty you sent me through the silent and wordless medium has so perfumed this dark prison cell that my head sways with joy and delight. [1]

Indeed, I could not remain untouched by your grace and refinement. What greater joy could there be for me than the fact that adversity and the tyranny of time have failed not only to extinguish those flames of loyalty[2] which we lit with the blood of our hearts, but that from these very burning flames, countless other lamps have been lit. If this chain continues, then God willing, the day is not far when the light of these lamps shall illumine the entire homeland, and as a result, the atmosphere we rightly call the festival of freedom will be realised.

I hope you shall continue to remember me from time to time, and that the modesty which tends to stand in your way in this regard shall now be overcome.

Wassalam
In need of your prayers,
Muhammad Maqbool Bhat

————————————————————————

1. *Rashid Zafar was residing in Jeddah with Raja Muzaffar Khan. Raja Sahib introduced him to Maqbool Bhat. This letter is Maqbool Bhat's reply to the emotional letter sent by Rashid Zafar. Due to a lack of paper, this letter was written on the reverse side of the aerogram addressed to Raja Muzaffar dated 18-8-81.*
2. *By "flames of loyalty," the reference is to true comrades in the movement.*

Letter 33: Maqbool Bhat to Malik Muhammad Asghar

Central Jail, New Delhi
18 August 1981

Brother Malik Muhammad Asghar Sahib,

Peace be upon you.

The letter you posted on 22nd June finally reached me on the blessed occasion of *Eid-ul-Fitr*, having traversed many stages of its journey. Thank you for remembering me.

I was somewhat comforted to learn that you have now resolved to maintain this correspondence at regular intervals. I remain unable to comprehend the feeling that kept obstructing you in this matter and led to your long silences.
Nevertheless—better late than never.

The sorrowful news of the passing of the late *Sufi Muhammad Zaman Sahib* had already reached me. Words cannot capture the grief and sadness this accursed news has caused me, especially on a piece of paper such as this. Not only because he was a distinguished leader of our freedom caravan, but also because—being a man—he was endowed by Providence with such rare attributes of sincerity, loyalty, and steadfast patience in the face of trials and tribulations, that they were reserved for him alone.

His passing has left a void in the history of our struggle that, if not impossible, will certainly be difficult to fill. I pray that the Almighty grants him a place among His mercy and bestows upon his bereaved family the strength of beautiful patience.

The finest way for us to honour his memory is to continue striving for those ideals and goals to which he devoted his life, and to make the values of sincerity and loyalty—which were so dear to him—a guiding light for ourselves in that struggle. Pray that God grants us the strength to work for the fulfilment of those dreams he dreamt throughout his life. By persistently standing against deniers of truth and justice for the sake of those unfulfilled longings and aspirations, we can bring solace to the restless soul of not only the late Sufi Sahib but also all those martyrs of the nation whom he joined in the hereafter. What better way of *Īsāl-e-Sawāb* could there be than this.

You mentioned my brother *Malik Muhammad Ijaz*[1]. Kindly convey my heartfelt greetings to him. In your next letter, do write in a bit more detail about his treatment and recovery. I remain deeply concerned about the illness he's facing. Yet from such a distance, what more can I do for him besides praying? I hope that by now, he has significantly improved.

I was heartened to hear that respected *Mir Qayyum Sahib*[2] also suffered from some ailment. Though we are not in correspondence, the memories associated with him are still fresh in

my mind. I pray that Allah keeps him in His protection. I would be delighted if you could share in detail the health and well-being of Mir Sahib and all our other elder comrades. The role of these noble friends in kindling the flames of unity and selfless commitment to our cause is not only a golden chapter in our history, but also unforgettable and worthy of emulation by all of us.

By the grace of God, my health is perfectly fine. All other conditions remain the same. I continue to be confined in Ward No. 16, i.e., the "death cell." By Allah's grace, I have no mental distress, for as a God-believing man, I hold firm that the best life is one spent in the struggle for the triumph of truth against falsehood, and the finest strength is that which is tested in the course of such jihad. Therefore, there is absolutely no room for sorrow or despair. Just remember me in your prayers.

This time, I received Eid cards from several friends and comrades in Kotli. Though responding to each one individually would be difficult, I am writing a collective reply through Janab Mubarak Bismil[3]. I hope both letters will reach Kotli together. In the meantime, I request you to kindly thank all those comrades on my behalf.

Wassalam
In need of your prayers,
Muhammad Maqbool Bhat

Note: The names of the friends and comrades who remembered me on the blessed occasion of Eid and whom I wish to thank are as follows: Mubarak Ali Bismil, Muhammad Arif, Raza Ahmad Rathore, Anjum Nadeem, M. Ashfaq Anjum, Muhammad Maqsood (Naar), Muhammad Razaq Aasi (Naar), and "a Kashmiri," who painted and sent an Eid gift by hand.

————————————————————————————

1. *Malik Muhammad Ijaz of Kotli..*
2. *Mir Abdul Qayyum was a patriotic Kashmiri. He was detained in the Ganga Hijacking case and subjected to torture. He lived in Karachi and is now deceased.*
3. *Maqbool Bhat's letter to Bismil Sahib could not be found.*

Letter 34: Maqbool Bhat to Dr. Farooq Haider

Central Jail, New Delhi
25 August 1981

Brother Farooq Haider Sahib,

Peace be upon you.

After quite a long interval, I received your affectionate letter, coincidentally on the auspicious occasion of *Eid-ul-Fitr*. Not only did you alleviate my concerns, but you also provided me with delightful feelings of comfort and joy in spite of the hardships of imprisonment during this festive time. Thank you for this kindness.

The bouquet of verses you sent this time has rejuvenated my spirit. This life in prison is indeed peculiar; the sense of desolation in this environment becomes even more pronounced when, after a long time, I come across a letter from a friend mentioning a beautiful couplet or literary piece. For years, I have not encountered any works by notable writers or poets, nor do I foresee any opportunity to do so until the end of this period of imprisonment. Although there is a library service in this jail for namesake, I have only been able to obtain a few exceptions in terms of quality literature. Instead, there exists an endless collection of crime fiction deemed *trash*, which has generally been acquired as donations from libraries in certain Western countries. While writing this letter, I pondered what I should send you in return when a song was played on the radio transistor in the adjoining cell. Its melodies and meanings were so enchanting that these two couplets stuck with me.

Thus, I present them to you:

> *"Meri mohabbat javan rahi hai,*
> *Sada rahi hai sada rahe gi.*
>
> *Jo aag dil mein lagi hui hai,*
> *Main to manzil ki roshni hai.*
>
> *Na ye bhi hai, na ye bujhe gi,*
> *Sada rahi hai sada rahe gi.*
>
> *Tumhare pehlu mein gar mere hum,*
> *To maut kitni haseen hogi.*
>
> *Chita mein jal kar bhi yaad teri,*
> *Sada rahi hai sada rahe gi."*

(translation)

"My love has stayed forever young,
It always was, and shall remain.

The flame that burns within my heart,
Is but the light that guides my way.

It neither dims, nor will it fade—
It always was, and shall remain.

If I should die beside your grace,
Then death would wear a lovely face.

Even if I burn on funeral pyres,
The thought of you shall still remain."

My health is, by God's grace, perfectly fine. All other matters remain unchanged.

Recently, there was considerable talk about the execution of my "sentence", but it seems that, in light of the protests arising against this proposed decision across the homeland, those who claim to dictate fate have deemed it prudent to put the matter on hold for now. It is difficult to say which way the winds will turn next; anyway, except for the "commodity of pain," what do the beggars of this caravan possess. No matter how many robberies the men of the times attempt, they cannot acquire anything but disgrace. This "commodity of pain" is such wealth that, despite being plundered, it cannot be taken away from those of heart. It is this priceless possession that makes it possible that even amidst "thousand deserts laid" and "countless suns arising," there is neither moisture on the eyelids nor dust accumulating on the brows of the travelers.[1] Pray that Allah Almighty keeps us from being deprived of this precious possession during any turn of life's journey and any trial we face; for if this possession is lost, then it will be understood that life has fallen into a loss that cannot be compensated for in this world or the next.

This Eid, I received letters from several friends and comrades. One letter is from *Aman Sahib* in London. I have already replied to him. I have heard that you too are planning to travel to Europe for sightseeing. May Allah grant that this letter reaches you before you begin your journey to the foreign land.

I hope you will continue this correspondence in the future. It has been quite a while since the respected *Jaswãl Sahib* has remembered me. I would be pleased if you could convey my greetings to all our friends and inform me of their well-being in return.

Please convey my greetings to your family and lots of love to the children. Don't forget to reply to this letter.

Wassalam

In need of your prayers,
Muhammad Maqbool Bhat

Note: Please be sure to accept my wishes for Eid in return.

———————————————————————————

1. *Maqbool Bhat has centred the theme of the iton his own two couplets:*

   Hazar dasht pare, laakh aaftaab ubhrey,
   Jabeen pe gard, palak par nami nahin aayi.

   Kahan kahan na luta qafila faqiron ka,
   Mata-e-dard mein lekin kami nahin aayi.

   Though countless deserts rose, and endless suns would blaze,
   No dust upon my brow, no tears to mark my gaze.

   Where have the saints not lost their sacred way—
   Yet in the wealth of pain, no lessening to this day.

Letter 35: Maqbool Bhat to Mian Ghulam Sarwar

(This letter is presented in its original English form, distinct from the other letters in this collection, which have been translated from Urdu.)

Tihar Jail Delhi
15 October 1981

My dear Mr. Sarwar,

This is to acknowledge your telegraphic message of greetings on the occasion of *Eid-u-Duha*. Thank you very much for the kind remembrance and expression of love and good wishes. I cannot but appreciate your choice of remembering me on this auspicious occasion, which symbolises the offer of supreme sacrifice for one's faith and ideals. History certainly does not offer a better example than the one of prophet Ibrahim to idealise man's devotion and dedication to the cause, be cherishes as well as his perseverance, when on trial, in the persuit of his beliefs. Given our weaknesses, we may not rise to such levels, yet we can surely follow in the footsteps of such great man at least according to our capacities. This, I think is an obligation which no Conscientious person, least of all from amongst our people can afford to forgo, for;-

"Yeh daur apne Ibraheem ki talaash mein hai,
Sanam kadah hai jahan La ilaha illallah."

(translation)

"An Abraham by the age is sought to break the idols of this Hall:
The avowal of God's Oneness can make all these idols headlong fall."

Hope you are in the best of health and spirits. Do remember me in your prayers please. The delivery of "detailed letter" is still awaited. My respects and good wishes for you and all other friends and well-wishers.

Your sincerely,
Muhammad Maqbool Bhat,
Ward No.16, Tihar Jail,
New Delhi-64

P.s: I am in recipt of an Eid Greetings, Telegram from Mahaz-e-Azadi Anentnag. Since it does not mention the name of its sender, I fail to make out as to how it can be answered.

Letter 36: Maqbool Bhat to Dr. Farooq Haider

Tihar Jail, New Delhi
20 June 1982

Brother Farooq Haider Sahib,

Peace be upon you.

I received your affectionate letter dated 26 May 1982. After a long time, I write these few lines to inform you of my well-being. It is certainly not the case that you have faded from my mind; however, what can be said of this period of imprisonment, where desires and affections are inevitably forced to bow to "circumstances".

A few days ago, I received a letter from *Sarwar Sahib* in London. He conveyed the tragic news that our brother *Malik Aftab Sahib*[1] has passed away. Indeed, to Allah we belong and to Him we shall return.

Since death is a truth, there is no escape from it. However, those who die leave behind memories that inevitably leave their marks. The memories associated with the late *Aftab Sahib* will remain fresh in our minds for a long time to come. I pray that Allah grants him a place in His mercy and bestows upon you and the other bereaved family members the strength to bear this calamity with patience. Please convey my condolences and sympathy to the late Sahib's two sons.

By the grace of God, my health is perfectly fine, and I am spending my days in patience and gratitude. All other conditions remain unchanged. I will make an effort to ensure that this correspondence continues in the future.

Please convey my heartfelt greetings to all friends and family.

Wassalam
Your brother,
Muhammad Maqbool Bhat

————————————————————————

1. *Malik Aftab was the brother of Dr. Farooq Haider.*

Letter 37: Maqbool Bhat to Malik Ghulam Sarwar

Delhi Prison
20 June 1982

Brother Sarwar Sahib,

Peace be upon you.

I address you again after quite a long interval. It is not that I had forgotten you, but the circumstances were such that the path for letters of well-being to reach you had become rather uncertain. You must have heard that saying: *bāsī kaṛāhi mein ubāl ānā* (A sudden reaction from someone long inactive or irrelevant. *lit:* the old pot suddenly boiling over). The moment you sent the sum of twenty-two thousand for legal proceedings, the calm and cold "pot" of the "self-appointed defenders of divinity" suddenly began to boil over with heat. Since the matter was entirely within the bounds of law, they couldn't quite withdraw, but left no effort spared in causing obstruction.

At first, the bank draft was seized under the guise of "Safe Custody" through the superintendent and kept with them. They kept delaying the encashment of the cheque. When nearly six months had passed, I filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court and began a hunger strike—only then, in mid-March '82, did they agree to cash it. Once the cheque was encashed, the matter turned to the disbursement of the funds, and again the same delaying tactics began. Meanwhile, I had already engaged a legal team and filed an application in the Supreme Court for the release of the amount. The judgement came in our favour. I have already paid ten thousand rupees to the lawyers for the initial preparations, and one of my lawyers has gone from Delhi to Srinagar to review the case records[1]. He is expected to return by the end of this month, bringing with him copies of all necessary documents. By then, the Supreme Court's summer recess will also have ended, and after appropriate consultation, the writ petition shall be filed. As it stands, my lawyers are quite hopeful and are willing to pursue multiple legal avenues in this matter. By mid-July, I hope to be in a position to fully brief you on all relevant details.

From London, Janab Zubair Sahib had sent a £50 international money order; it arrived and has been cashed. However, the bank draft you had sent last year—draft no. ODC-1069052 CE, dated 16 April 1981, drawn on the State Bank of India for the amount of 540 rupees—has still not been cashed. First, its validity has expired, i.e., it has lapsed. Second, the "confiscators" can no longer find it among their files, as the custodians here have changed in the meantime. I suggest you speak with your bank authorities; if they can issue a fresh draft in place of the missing one, or perhaps transfer the amount through some alternative means, that would be much better. In any case, I shall continue to apply pressure on the jail authorities to trace it.

You may be surprised to hear that your letter dated 18 December reached me only at the end of March—perhaps because it managed to escape the attention of the censors. Otherwise, the situation since last October has been such that every letter addressed to me has fallen prey to the benevolence of these "self-proclaimed protectors." What a splendid "boil" that was.

I was deeply saddened to learn that the elder brother of our brother Dr. Farooq Haider—Malik Aftab Sahib—has departed from this mortal world. *Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un.* Kindly do convey my message of condolence to him on my behalf. I do intend to write to him directly as well to express my sympathies, but who knows whether it will even reach him? May Allah grant the departed a place in His mercy and bestow upon the bereaved the strength to endure this sorrow.

By the grace of God, I am in good health and am spending these days of imprisonment with patience and gratitude. I believe the legal campaign we are about to initiate carries significant political implications. Therefore, I wish for it to be organised in a thorough and powerful manner, drawing together all resources with full preparation. It may well be that some further contribution is required from your side. However, I will only be able to inform you in detail once my lawyers[2] return from Srinagar and consult with me. Until then, I request that you remain mentally prepared. God willing, we shall remain in regular contact.

Please convey my heartfelt greetings to all friends, acquaintances, and family members.

Wassalam
In need of your prayers,
Muhammad Maqbool Bhat

————————————————————————————

1. *Muzaffar Baig, a well-known advocate from Delhi, had gone to Srinagar to review the case records.*
2. *Abdul Gani Lone (Advocate) and Pyare Lal Pandu.*

Letter 38: Maqbool Bhat to Master Muhammad Maqbool

Tihar Jail, New Delhi
24 May 1983

Dear Brother Muhammad Maqbool Khan Sahib,

Peace be upon you. I hope you are in good health and safety.

A few days ago, my brother Ghulam Nabi came here from Kashmir for a visit. He conveyed the heartbreaking news that our sister Fatima[1] has departed from this worldly life. *Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un.* The personal grief this tragic news has brought me cannot be expressed in these lines. It is a universal truth that every living being eventually leaves this mortal realm; however, the circumstances under which both Raja and now Fatima have left us are so painful and sorrowful that the wounds they leave behind may never fully heal. For any human being with a sensitive heart, what could be more devastating and heart-wrenching than being deprived of the opportunity to share in the grief of their loved ones during their final moments simply due to the relentless constraints of circumstances? In such situations, what can be offered except for tears of helplessness? The truth is that the cruelty of the circumstances has reached such levels that even the gift of tears has dried up under the pressure of time. In such moments, silence in mourning is the only recourse.

Nevertheless, as believers, we must submit to the will of the Divine. It is not necessary for us to understand all the nuances of divine intention. In the current state, beseeching for patience and steadfastness from the Divine Court is indeed the best approach. I hope you will join me in this prayer. I pray that the Gracious God grants the departed a place in His mercy and bestows upon us, the bereaved, the blessing of enduring patience.

I apologize for addressing you after so many years; it is not that you have slipped from my memory or that the bond we share has diminished in freshness and strength. There were circumstances that compelled me, and some personal concerns and reasons that prevented me from maintaining direct correspondence with you against my wishes. I trust you will understand these concerns and reasons. However, if you feel any resentment regarding this matter, I humbly apologize. I am certain that you would not perceive this situation as a deliberate neglect or indifference on my part.

By the grace of God, I am in good health, and I am spending my days of imprisonment with patience and gratitude. I have filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court for further legal proceedings concerning my case, which will be heard in mid-July. My lawyers are quite hopeful in this regard. We shall see what the future holds. I hope your prayers will accompany me so that this phase of trials and tribulations will conclude favorably. I have not received any letters from Javaid and Shaukat for a long time. However, I recently had the

opportunity to see the letters they wrote to my brother Ghulam Nabi. Thankfully, he is in good health. Moreover, with your presence, I have no concerns regarding their guidance in the right direction. Your support and guidance will undoubtedly fill the void they have felt in my absence.

I would be pleased if you could take the trouble to inform me in detail about your and all your family members' well-being. Please also write about the educational and professional pursuits of dear Manzoor Ahmed[2] and Abdul Ghaffar Ahmed.[3]

Please convey my warm regards to all relatives and friends, and my love to the children.

Wassalam
In need of your prayers,
Muhammad Maqbool Bhat

————————————————————————————

1. *The addressee's wife.*
2. *The addressee's son.*
3. *The addressee's nephew.*

Letter 39: Maqbool Bhat to Master Muhammad Maqbool

Tihar Jail, Delhi
8 September 1983

Dear Brother Farooq Haider Sahib,

Peace be upon you.

After quite a while, I received your letter of well-wishing from mid-August, which you had posted at the beginning of July. It was quite a brief letter, a rare example of brevity, consisting of a total of forty words across four sentences, out of which ten words were devoted to titles, salutations, and inquiries about well-being. Believe me, my spirits were lifted. Perhaps you thought that by keeping it short, the "journey" of this letter would also be brief. However, you may not know that the "yar log" (the jail authorities *lit: friends*) consider it a charming act of love and try to glean any useful information from the spaces between the words or the lines. Nevertheless, it is still a joyful matter that your affectionate letter was received, even if it took a month and a half. The effort of sending a registered letter seems unnecessary because, occasionally, I do receive letters sent by the esteemed Jaswāl Sahib via "book post." Therefore, letters destined to become offerings on the altar of the gods of fate cannot be saved by the formalities of registered mail.

By the grace and mercy of Allah, I am in good health and I pray for your well-being and that of our other friends. I apologize for not being able to inform you of my health for such a long time. Some difficulties and considerations played a part in this. However, I hope you will accept my apologies in this regard, and I assure you that you will not have any complaints from now on.

The first phase of our efforts for legal proceedings in the Supreme Court here has been completed. On 13 August, the division bench of the court, headed by the Chief Justice, approved our writ petition, in which we had requested the state government and the High Court to provide access to the records of the cases under which my current imprisonment and "sentence" are imposed. You need not be told what excuses the state has concocted to keep this record hidden from us, despite being the aggrieved party, and how they have frustrated our efforts over the past two years with delays and excuses.

Nevertheless, our struggle continues, and the next step will be taken soon after examining the records. When this stage arrives, I will provide you with the necessary information. The plan is to obtain the required documents after reviewing the records and then challenge the legal validity of the case proceedings. Our lawyers believe that the case is quite strong. We will continue our efforts and leave the outcome in the hands of Allah. I seek your prayers in this regard.

Please convey my heartfelt greetings to all friends.

Wassalam,
Your brother,
Muhammad Maqbool Bhat

Note: If Shaukat's FSC results have come out, please do inform me. I received a letter from my daughter Manza a while ago, but I do not know if my response reached her. In any case, convey my regards to all family members. Much love for the children.

Letter 40: Maqbool Bhat to Naseer Wani [1]

Tihar Jail, New Delhi
15 October 1983

Dear Naseer,

Peace be upon you. I hope you are in good health.

A few days ago, I received your letter of affection dated 4 May 1983, but due to some misunderstandings on your part and the "difficulties" of travel, it only reached me on 9 September 1983. I apologize for the delay in responding. After reading your brief letter, it felt like a breath of fresh air in these desolate autumn-like surroundings of the prison. The memories that had been buried in the folds of time suddenly revived, and before me appeared the embodied image of the sincerity and loyalty that is called Naseer Mahmood Wani in our gatherings.

I wish to write this letter in poetic language, but claiming accessibility to art and literature is beyond my capacity, and the length of this imprisonment has also severed the weak connection I once had with the fine arts. In this regard, the only means to quench my thirst is a small transistor radio on which I often listen to some film songs from the local station or ghazals selected by singers not for their meanings but for their melodious expression.

This was just a parenthetical comment; I was talking about the memories associated with you. If you have ever thought in some corner of your mind that the passage of time has dulled the freshness of those memories, then believe me you have fallen prey to the same misunderstanding as me. The memories of participants and companions in the struggle for shared goals, aspirations, and hopes are the gifts that we must hold onto, as they are a bright testament to our determination to continue the journey. How can such memories ever be allowed to fade from the mind and heart? Your feelings of pain regarding the homeland and its people are indeed commendable. I am certain that as long as this feeling remains alive, the springs of movement and action will continue to flow, for which our history will always be proud in the future.

The greatest demand of sincerity and loyalty is that we should understand the position where history has placed us and perform our roles with excellence and goodness. Those who bow down in prayer at the moment of life's battle, despite all their claims of loyalty, fall into ignorance and folly; if this is accompanied by a desire for safety, then there is no greater sin. May Allah protect us from being included in this group of sinners. Please join me in this prayer.

By the grace of Allah, my health is completely fine, and I am passing my days of imprisonment with patience and gratitude. My death sentence has not been revoked, but its implementation has been postponed. The legal proceedings in the Supreme Court are

ongoing, and although we have initially achieved some success, I will provide details on this in the future, as there is no room for that in this letter.

I was glad to hear that you have gotten married and are now a father to a son. Please convey my warmest regards to your wife and lots of love to little *Basim.* I pray that Allah grants you success at every turn in life. I am sure that the "ascetic life" you have chosen will yield rewards in the divine presence. I am grateful for the interest and empathy you have shown regarding my personal affairs. In this state of imprisonment, I am unable to gather much information about my loved ones. You can obtain substantial information about them through friends in Pindi and keep me informed as well.

Note: Due to space constraints in the letter, I am unable to write more. I hope you will continue to remember me from time to time.

Wassalam,
Your well-wisher,
Muhammad Maqbool Bhat

————————————————————————————

1. *This, the last letter in this collection—addressed to Naseer Wani and dated 15 October 1983—is not part of Shaoor-e-Farda. It is, to the best of our knowledge, Maqbool Bhat's final available letter. I was able to include it after directly reaching out to Mr. Naseer Wani, who now resides in Europe. He generously confirmed its authenticity and shared the details necessary for its inclusion.*

End of Collection

This compilation ends here.

Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy and consistency across the translations. Any errors or omissions are mine alone. For corrections or feedback, feel free to reach out:

Email: *koshur@email.com*
Instagram: *@ajkkoshur*

—

Compiled and translated with care,
2025